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HEALTH • HAPPINESS • FAMILY LIFE

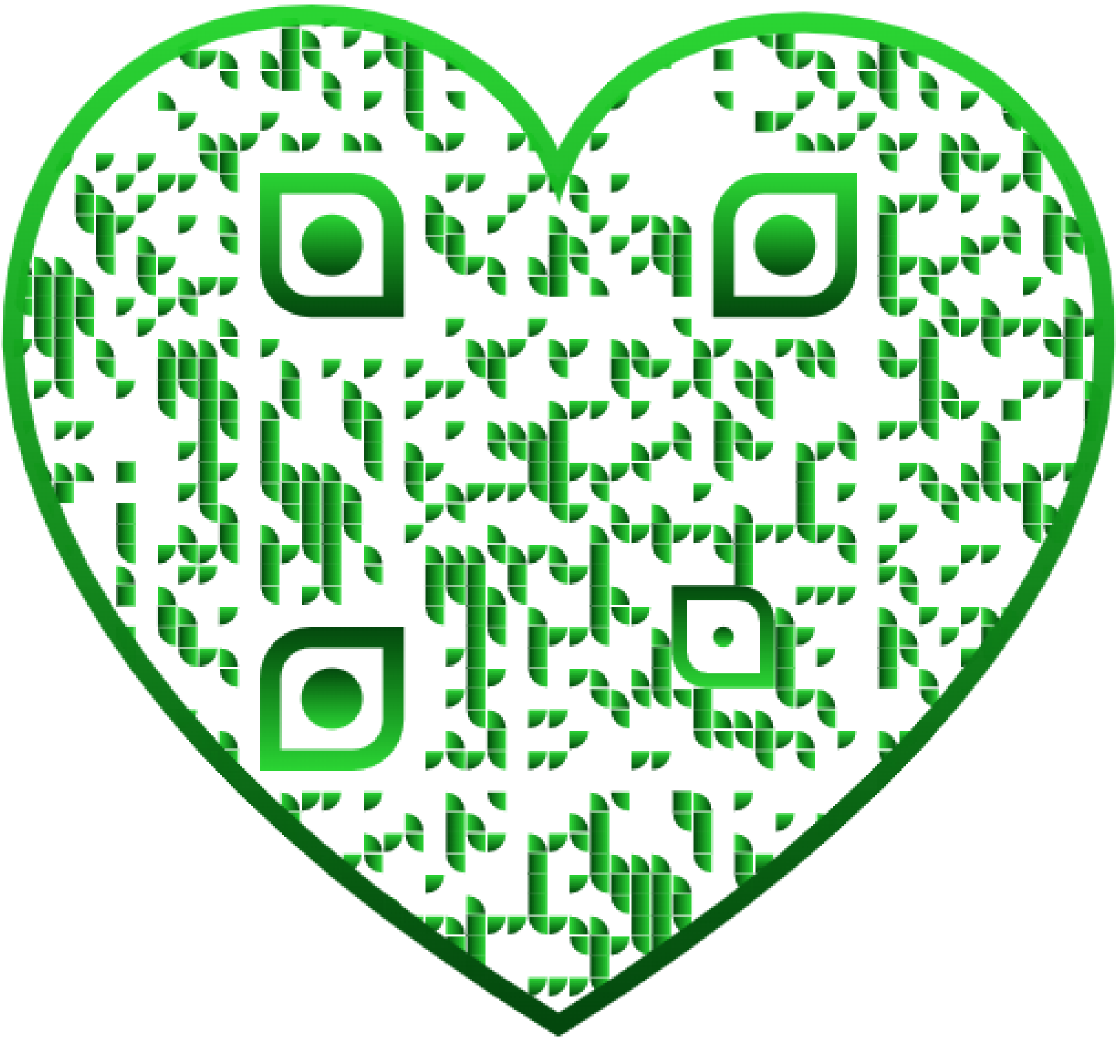
Candis

NOVEMBER 2025

CAROL KIRKWOOD

"We think we're in charge of our own destiny but it's just not true"

OVER £56 MILLION TO HEALTH CHARITIES SINCE 1962



baby lock

Make Your Own
CHRISTMAS JUMPER
with baby lock

Ever dreamed of creating your own festive jumper? Now you can – and it's easier than you think!

We made ours with the **baby lock primo**, a clever creative cover stitch machine, but we encourage you to explore **all of baby lock's decorative stitches** and let your imagination run wild.

The primo's **unique Swing Foot** lets you add **two top threads** for stunning Fair Isle patterns or fun designs like the snowman pictured here.

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Add family names in decorative stitches

Cute snowmen, reindeer & penguins

Sparkling threads for extra magic

...

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OUR NOVEMBER MUST-HAVES

Embrace the feeling of autumn with this novel handmade Acorn Shaped Soy Wax Candle **£12**
interludecandles.com

Golden Glow Drops make your skin look radiant. Add a few drops to moisturiser for a tinted finish, or directly on to skin for a natural glow! **£5.50**
w7makeup.co.uk

An ideal gift for any bakers in the family, this Mason Cash Heritage Set of Two Cream Coated Steel Cake Tins is durable, practical and stylish.
£9 *amazon.co.uk*

WELCOME TO

Candis

Hello

Everyone loves a feelgood story, and we've three happy reunion tales on **page 24,** a perfect antidote to the darker days of autumn – just like our interview with Carol Kirkwood on **page 18**. She tells Richard Barber why her novel-writing career has provided yet another source of joy in her life.

Our consumer editor Scott Dixon has some great advice on **page 70** for those getting ahead with online Christmas shopping or planning to send gifts by post this season. It could save you money and disappointment. Don't forget to check out his extra advice online at candis.co.uk/consumer.

We've got great winter getaway ideas on **page 94**. Travel editor Tristan Parker has selected three destinations for winter sun that won't break the bank and highlights the chilly charm of Riga.

Food editor Catherine Hill has created some fabulous comfort food recipes from **page 82**, perfect enjoying cosy nights in with family and friends. And don't forget to check your Lucky Numbers and Hidden Gems – it could be a great boost for your Christmas budget! Enjoy…
The Candis team

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COVER IMAGE CAMERA PRESS / NICKY JOHNSTON

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Wherever you see this symbol you can read more great content at candis.co.uk and on our socials

AGE IS A NUMBER, MINDSET IS EVERYTHING

Includes vitamin B1 which contributes to the **normal function of the heart**

Includes iron which contributes to the **reduction of tiredness & fatigue**

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To help maintain
health & vitality
VITABIOTICS
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To help maintain
health & vitality
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VITABIOTICS
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VITABIOTICS

2025-09-15_ADMIXWELWEW50+CONP_E

THIS MONTH
NOVEMBER

Make plans to catch up with friends and family and enjoy a host of inspiring activities in the run-up to Christmas…

MOVEMBER – MEN'S HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

1st
WORLD VEGAN DAY

5th
BONFIRE NIGHT

9th
REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

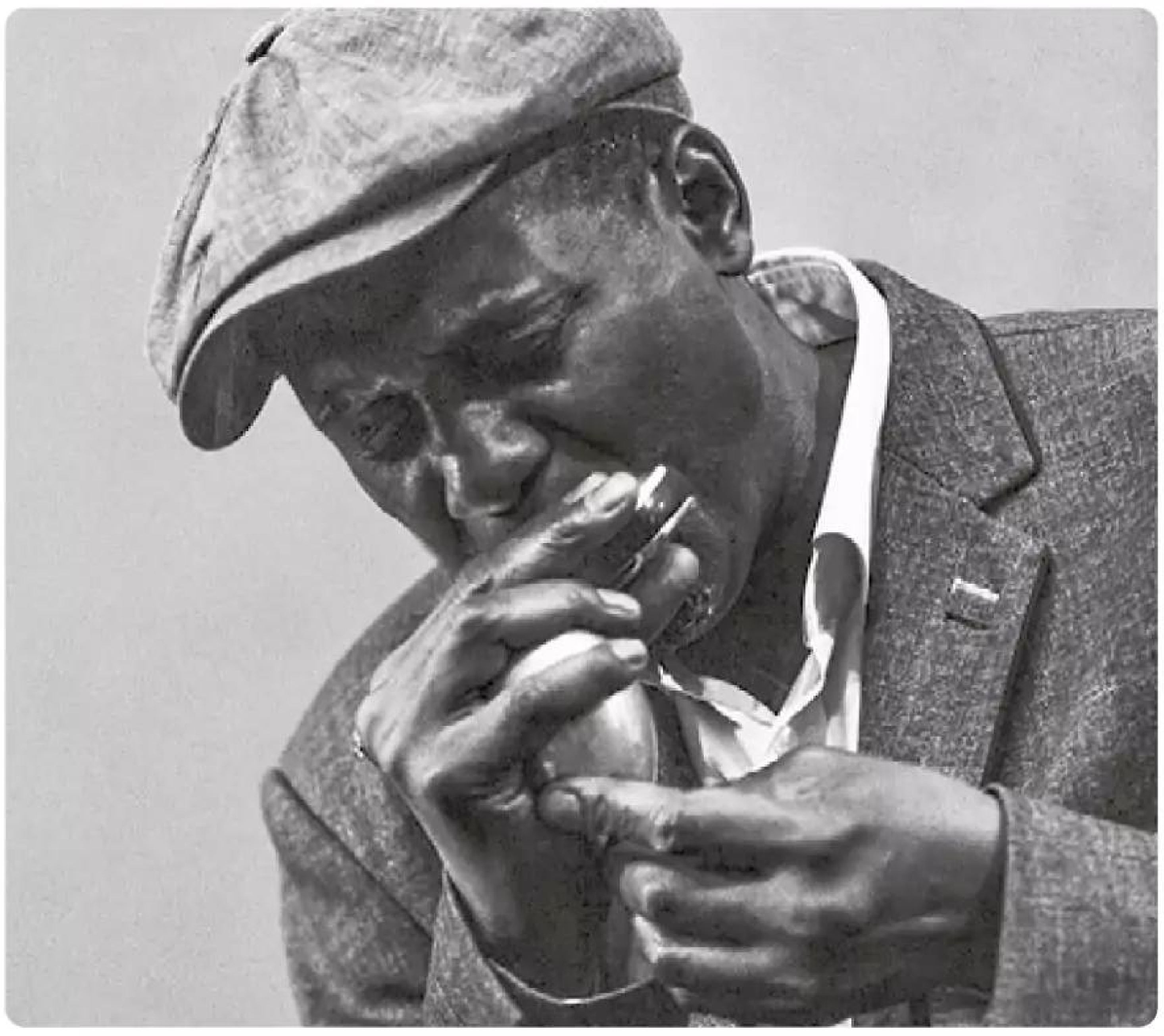
14th
WORLD DIABETES DAY

25th Nov-10th Dec
16 DAYS OF ACTION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

30th
ST ANDREW'S DAY

Get in the party spirit

Enjoy amazing shows and festivals as well as firework spectaculars and the return of festive Christmas markets...



Jazz, food and blues!

The inaugural Midhurst Jazz, Food and Blues Festival is coming to venues across Midhurst in Surrey, 14-16 November. Set in characterful spaces, intimate jazz clubs and buzzing blues bars, visitors can enjoy performances from award-winning artists from the UK, Europe and Argentina. There will be educational workshops and masterclasses plus food to complement the music, and money raised will support the next generation of musicians. Tickets from **midhurstjazzandblues.com**

Breathtaking ballet

Matthew Bourne's award-winning production of *The Red Shoes*, based on the fairytale by Hans Christian Anderson with music by Bernard Herrmann, opens at Plymouth Theatre Royal on 17 November, then heads to The Lowry, Salford, ahead of the Christmas season at Sadler's Wells, London, and a nationwide tour next year. The ballet is powerful tale of obsession, possession and one girl's dream to be the greatest dancer in the world! For details: **new-adventures.net**

Fantastic fireworks!

If you and the family love bonfire night, head to Alton Towers in Staffordshire to see their new immersive fireworks show, 7-9 November. Adrenalin-junkies can also ride on heart-pounding rollercoaster rides and enjoy a multitude of family attractions before the park closes for the season. Booking is recommended. See **altontowers.com**

Book ahead

The legend that is Barry Manilow returns to the UK next June for his Last Last Concerts to be held in Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Cardiff, Birmingham and London. With more than 85 million album sales worldwide, the showman ranks as the number one contemporary chart artist of all time. Barry's hit-packed concerts receive rave reviews – and this time he's adamant that this is his very last, last UK tour! See **ticketmaster.co.uk** and **ticketline.co.uk**

Their favourite things...

Desert Island Discs – created by Roy Plomley back in 1942 and now hosted by Lauren Laverne – features a fascinating array of guests who share the soundtrack of their lives, revealing what they would take to a desert island – eight tracks, a book and one luxury item. **BBC Radio 4, bbc.co.uk**

The last laugh

Extra dates have been added to *An Evening with the Fast Show*, celebrating one of the nation's favourite TV comedy shows. The cast will chat on stage about how it all began and will perform some of their best-loved sketches. Fans will see the return of hilarious characters including Ted and Ralph, Suit You Sir Tailors and Competitive Dad. The tour starts in Cambridge on 3 November with numerous venues across the country, culminating at the London Palladium until 20 January 2026. **thefastshow.live**

Save the date

The countdown is on for the Spirit of Christmas Fair at Olympia, London, 3-9 November. More than 600 exhibitors offer homeware, decorations and Christmas gifts from independent designers plus food and drink from artisan producers. This year also features Spirit Rising Stars, showcasing new businesses, talks workshops, and floral demonstrations. **spiritofchristmasfair.co.uk**

Magical markets

Originating in Europe, Christmas markets can now be found across the UK. Here's our guide to some of the venues where you can enjoy fun festive shopping...

Portmeirion Christmas Fair

(5-7 December 2025)

Decorated with Christmas trees and twinkling lights, the entire village of Portmeirion is transformed into a stunning venue for this fair, which features more than 100 stalls offering traditional Welsh food, bespoke jewellery and homeware. There will be workshops, live music and Santa's Grotto! See **portmeirion.wales/visit/whats-on/food-and-craft-fair**

Manchester Christmas Markets

(7 November-22 December)

There's something for everyone at Manchester's Christmas Markets, which are spread over nine locations, with over 200 stalls offering seasonal fare, the Christmas Parade, the ice rink in the Cathedral Gardens, the pretty Christmas Light Trail and, of course, Father Christmas. There are no entry fees. For more details and to plan your day, go to **visitmanchester.com**

Edinburgh Christmas Market

(15 November 2025-4 January 2026)

Head to the city centre to see the capital's festive transformation. As well as traditional Christmas markets with Scottish crafts and artisan stalls, there are funfair rides and live family outdoor events including ice skating and a big wheel offering spectacular views of the city as well as Santa's Stories for children, and more. Delicious festive fare will be available throughout including mulled wine and bratwurst sausages.

For the full line up and to buy tickets, go to **edwinterfest.com**

Stratford-upon-Avon Victorian Christmas Market

(29-30 November, 6-7 December)

This market has been staged to reflect the aesthetics of the Victorian era. Stalls will be selling artisan gifts and refreshments, there will be a plethora of workshops plus live performances to entertain visitors. **stratford.gov.uk**

WHAT TO WATCH

We've some great choices for you to enjoy...

BIG SCREEN

Wicked: For Good

This is the second part of the hit film *Wicked* and sees Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo) and Glinda (Ariana Grande) estranged, living with the consequences of their previous choices. Can they come together one more time? Their future, and the future of the whole of Oz, depends on it.

ITV

Frauds

Jodie Whittaker and Suranne Jones star as confidence tricksters Sam and Bert in this six-part heist drama. The two have a toxic relationship and have not seen each other for a decade but reunite for one last multi-million-pound art heist.

NETFLIX

Jay Kelly

A comedy-drama with George Clooney as Kelly, a famous movie actor, and his devoted manager Ron (Adam Sandler). They embark on a journey through Europe and along the way are forced to confront the choices they've made.

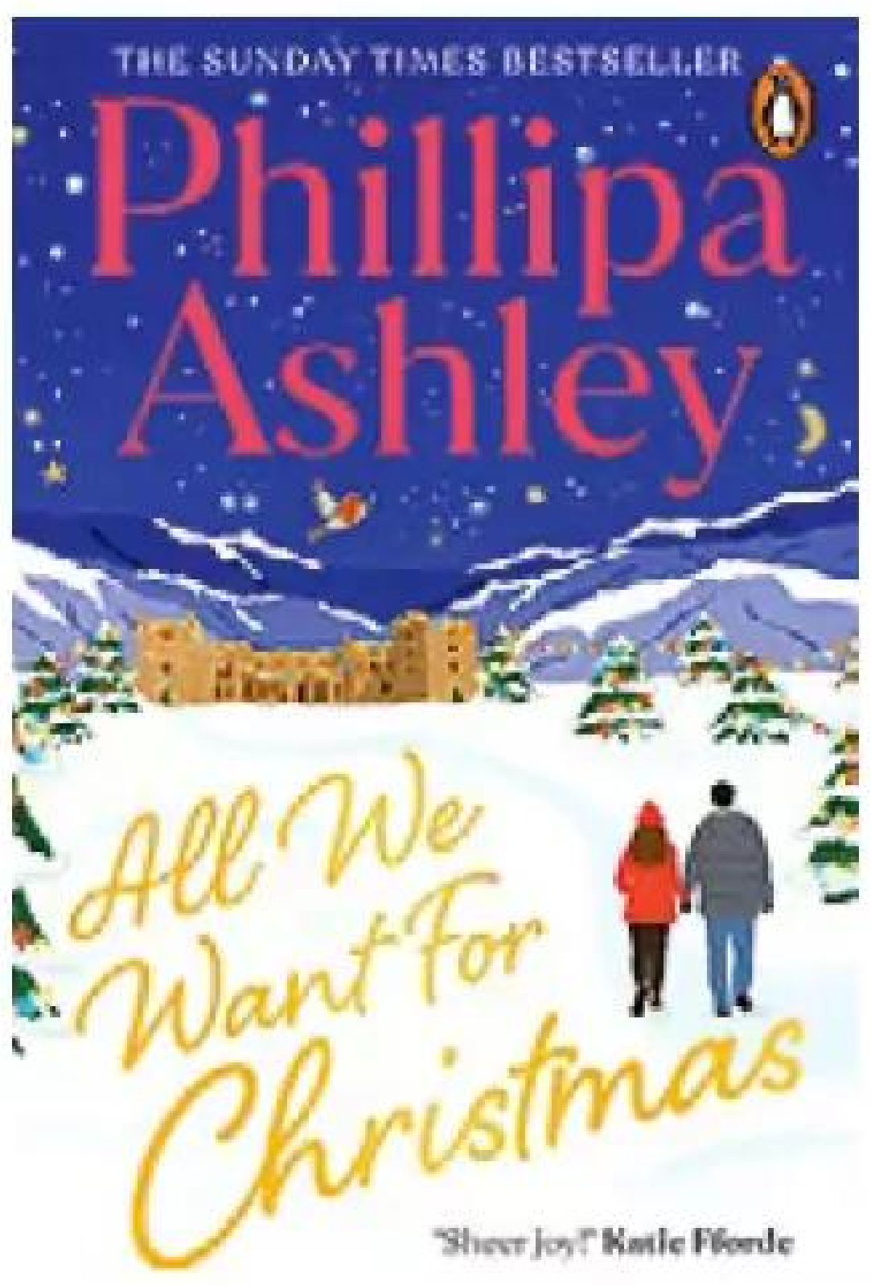
MOVIE MILESTONE

It's 25 years since the release of spy action-comedy *Charlie's Angels*, based on the popular 70s TV series of the same name. Starring Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore and Lucy Lui as the Angels, John Forsythe was the voice of Charlie and Bill Murray played Bosley. The film was a big hit and grossed over 264m dollars worldwide.

THE BOOKSHELF

Grab some time to cosy up with a great book – we've six top titles to tempt you...

> *"In the winter, she curls up around a good book and dreams away the cold"*
>
> **Ben Dylan Aaronovitch,** ***English author and screenwriter***

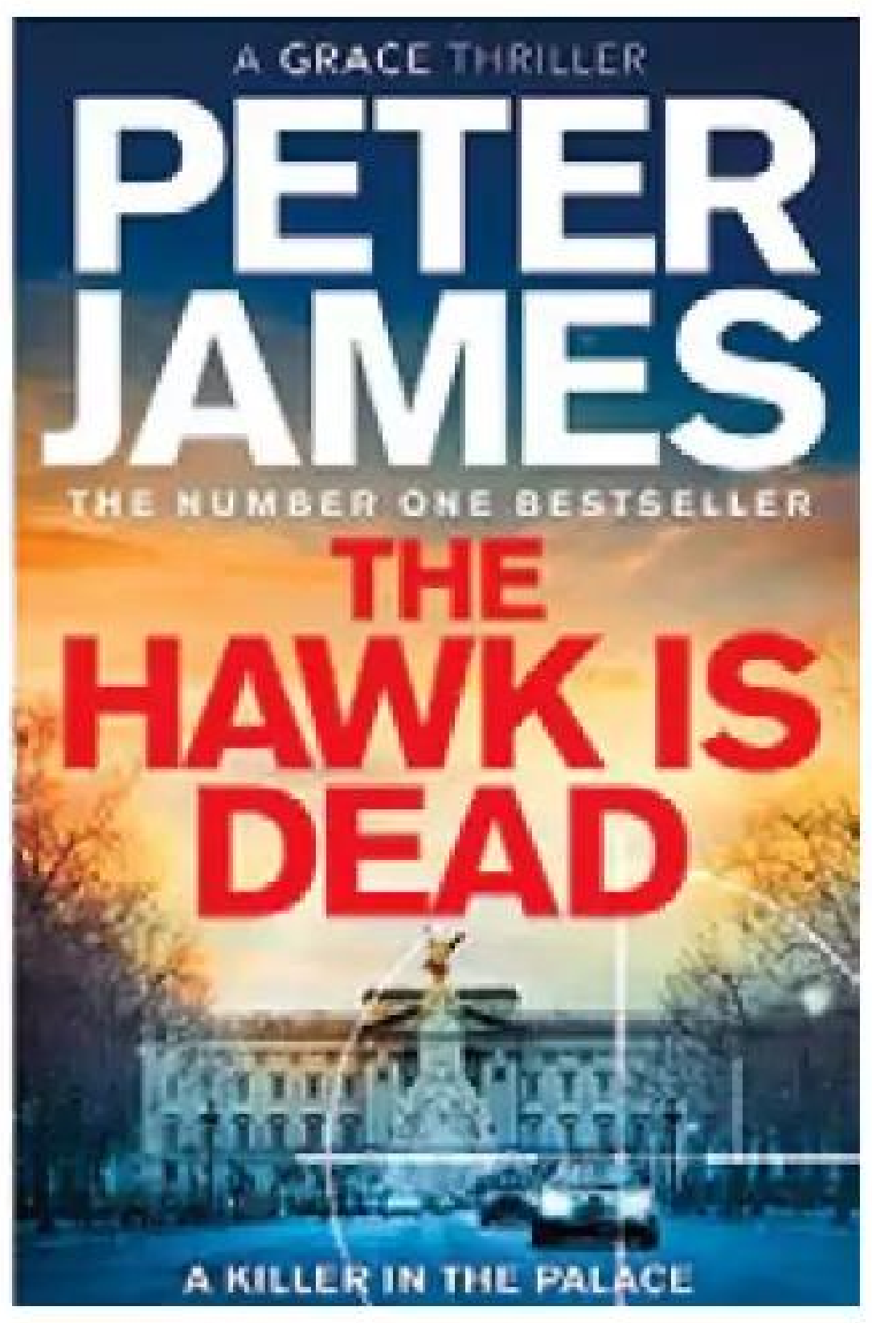

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
Phillipa Ashley
All We Want For Christmas
'Sheer joy!' Katie Fforde

WOMEN'S FICTION

All We Want for Christmas

by Phillipa Ashley *(£9.99 PBO, eBook, Audio, Penguin)*

Lara, events manager at Ravendale Castle in the Lake District, is busy planning a glittering light trail to transform the grounds into a Christmas wonderland. After a bad breakup the previous year, she meets technical manager Flynn and the attraction is instant. But just as Lara starts to fall for him, someone from Flynn's past turns up with a secret that threatens everything. Festive escapism in spades.

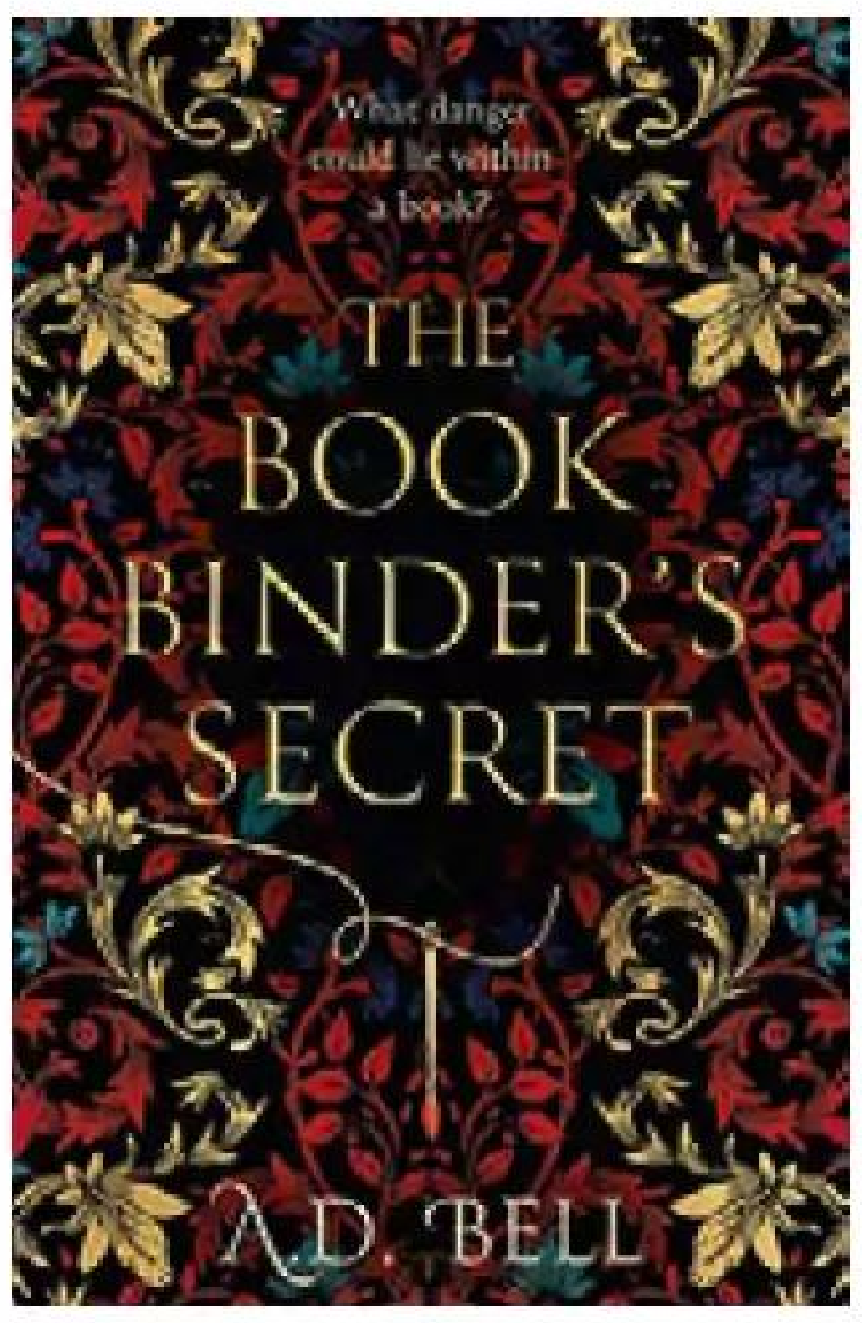

A GRACE THRILLER
PETER JAMES
THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER
THE HAWK IS DEAD
A KILLER IN THE PALACE

CRIME FICTION

The Hawk is Dead

by Peter James
(£22 HB, eBook, Audio, Pan Macmillan)

After the derailment of the Royal Train and a murder, Roy Grace is summoned to Buckingham Palace to investigate if it was an assassination attempt. Grace delves into the delicate investigation while sensing sinister undercurrents across the palace. The unique setting gives an insight into the inner workings of the palace and as the characters include King Charles and Queen Camilla (big fans of the author), it all adds to the intrigue. Suspense builds after a second murder when the pressure is on Grace to solve the case and keep the royals safe.

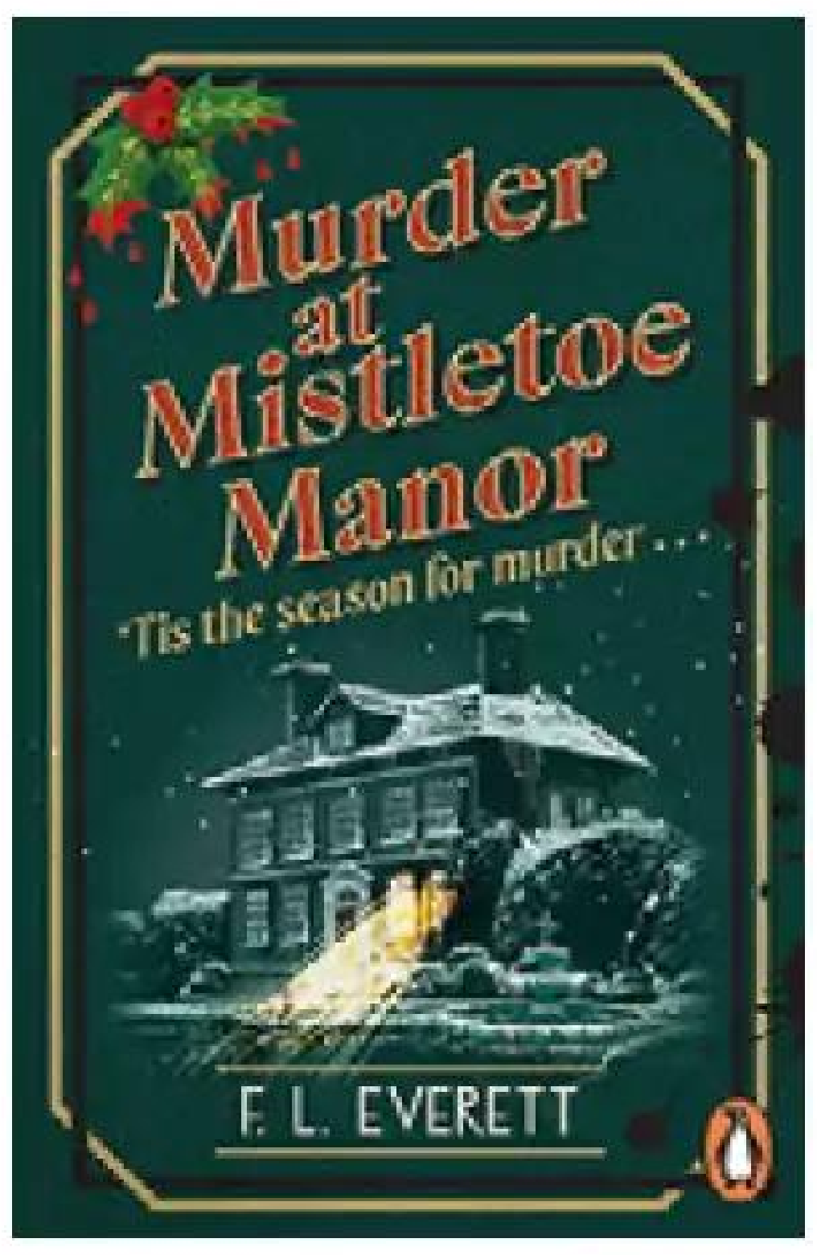

What danger could lie within a book?
THE BOOK BINDER'S SECRET
A.D. BELL

HISTORICAL FICTION

The Bookbinder's Secret

by AD Bell
(£20 HB, eBook, Audio, HQ)

In Oxford in 1901, Lilian Delaney is an apprentice bookbinder while helping her father in his failing bookshop. She's intelligent, spirited – and oppressed by the confines of being a woman in a male-dominated industry. When she finds a 50-year-old letter hidden in a burnt book, she's drawn to the mystery of a forbidden romance. She discovers there are more books with hidden pages recounting the story, and the mystery consumes her. But someone else is also looking for answers and Lily finds herself on a dangerous adventure.



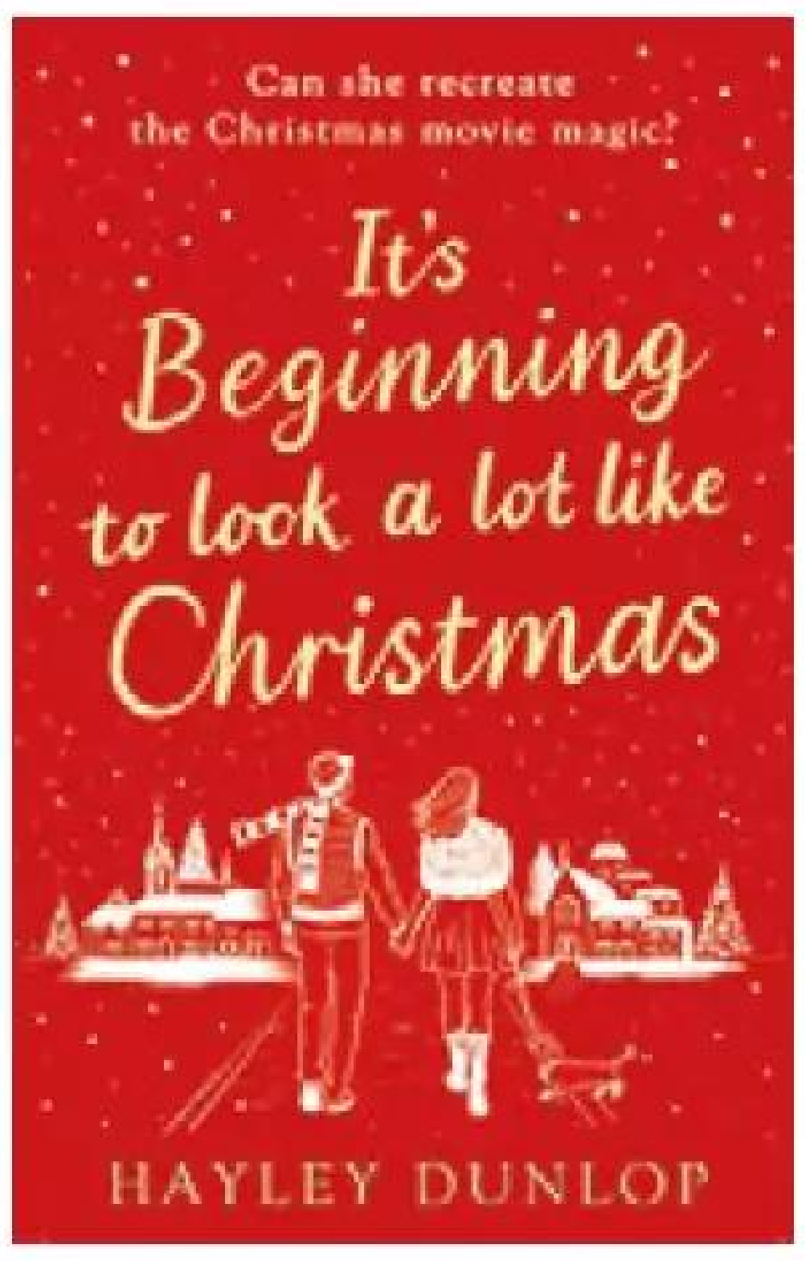
COSY CRIME

Murder at Mistletoe Manor

by FL Everett

(£9.99 PBO, eBook, Audio, Penguin)

Set in the remote Mistletoe Manor Hotel, where 12 strangers are stranded by the bad weather as a storm rages outside four days before Christmas. But who has checked in with murder on their mind? When a body is found the next morning in one of the luxurious four-poster beds, it's clear that not everyone is fond of the festive season, and the 12 guests have suddenly become 11 suspects. Who will live to see another Christmas? With well-drawn relatable characters, this contemporary yule-fuelled mystery is the perfect read with a glass of mulled wine in front of a roaring fire. Fans of authors Robert Thorogood and Rev Richard Coles will enjoy this seasonal locked-room mystery.



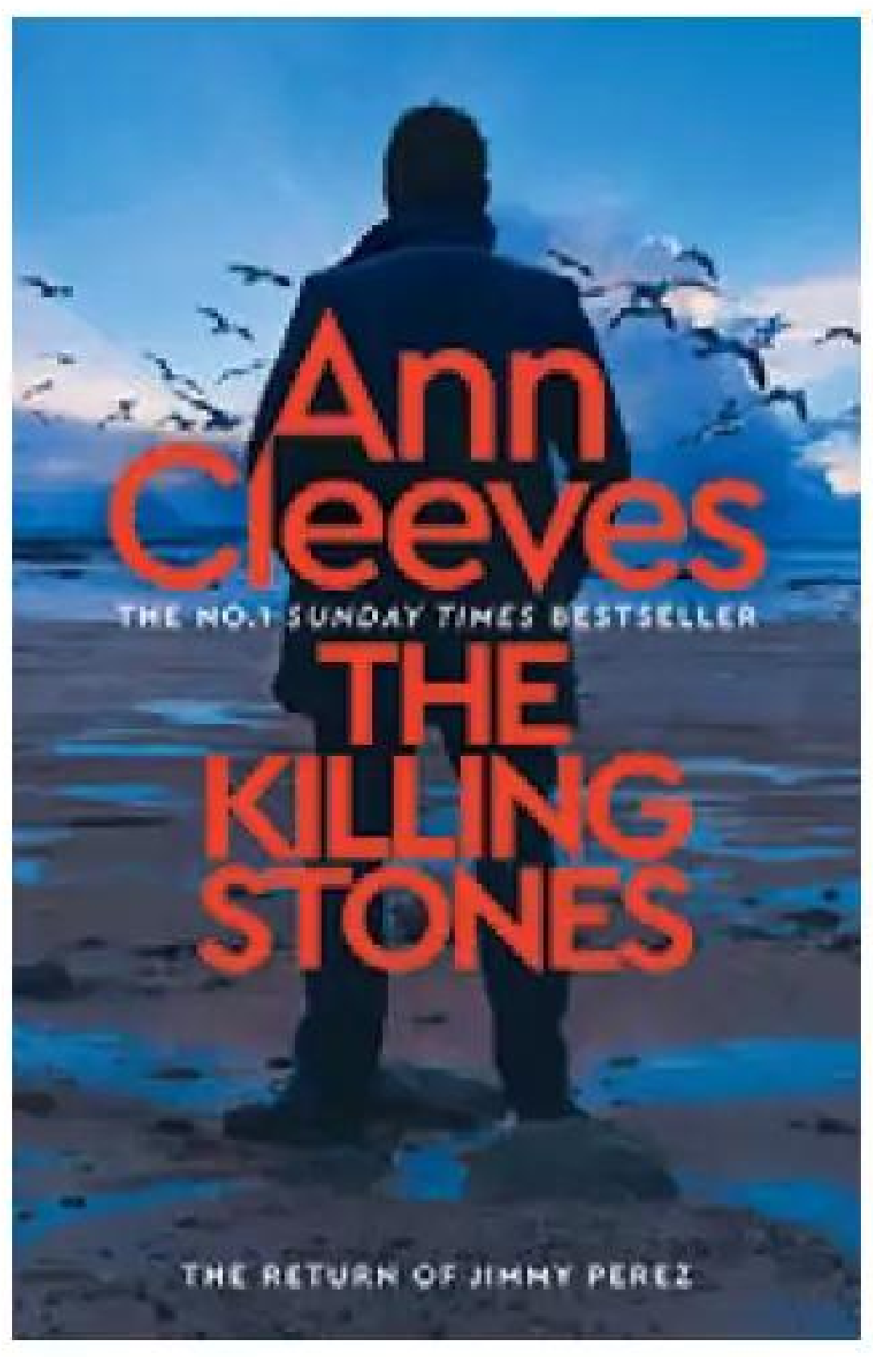
FESTIVE ROMCOM

It's Beginning to Look a lot like Christmas

by Hayley Dunlop

(£9.99 PBO, eBook, Audio, Hera Books)

Mally Allister likes predictability and finds comfort in trope-filled TV Christmas films. When she's destined to spend the holidays alone in her London flat, fate intervenes, and she's sent to her hometown on a writing assignment to recreate the corny films that she loves so much. As she begins to tick off the classic tropes on her list with the help of some of her childhood friends, will she discover that real life can measure up to her favourite films? With a wonderful protagonist and a poignant backstory, this insightful, humorous tale about second-chance romance based upon Christmas TV tropes, is just perfect for anyone looking for a relaxing, festive read with some added feelgood vibes.



SUSPENSE THRILLER

The Killing Stones **by Ann Cleeves**

(£22 HB, eBook, Audio, Macmillan)

The body of Archie Stout is discovered after a violent storm on the Orkney Isles. He has been killed with a Neolithic stone said to have mythical properties. Detective Jimmy Perez, who has left Shetland and is now living on Orkney, is shocked to discover that the victim is his childhood friend – and now the case is personal. During the investigation Perez finds himself drawn into the lives of the islanders, their secrets and beliefs, and he must work quickly to discern truth from the legend before the murderer decides to add to the body count. With a compelling plot and excellent characterisation, this descriptive story has an ending that will catch you off guard!

FESTIVE COUNTDOWN

With just over a month to go, novelty Advent calendars are one of the talking points of the season. Here are some of our favourites to ensure the build-up to Christmas is exciting for everyone...

24 Video Adventures with Lindt TEDDY
SCAN ME
Lindt TEDDY
24 Finest Lindt Milk Chocolates

TEDDY DELIGHTS!

Lindt TEDDY Augmented Reality Calendar 250g

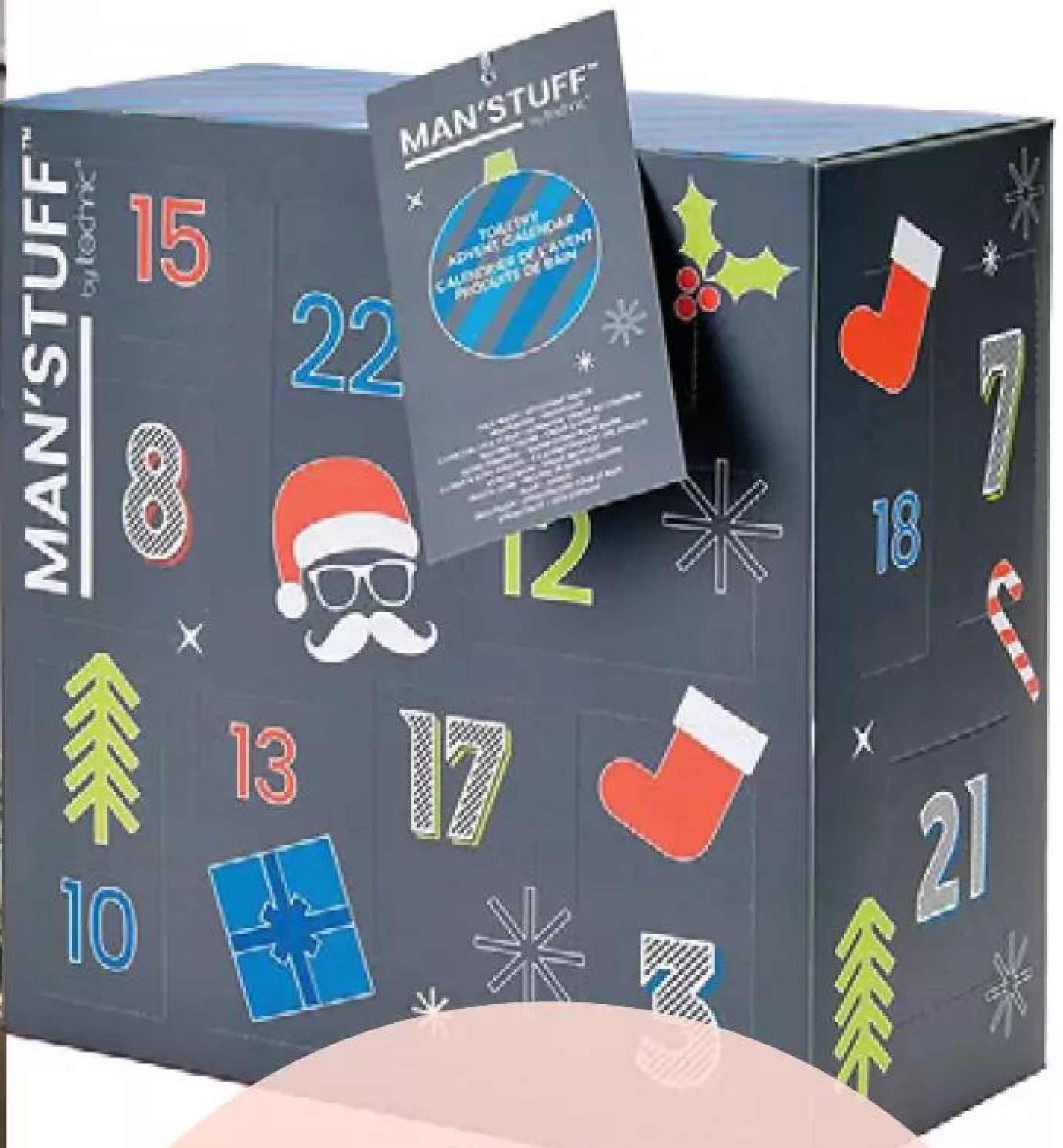
Scan the QR code of this magical calendar to watch the heart-warming story of Teddy unfold while you enjoy the finest Swiss chocolates. **£15**, *lindt.co.uk/shop and some Lindt Chocolate shops*

HOME SCENTS

Fragrance Lovers' Advent Calendar

Perfect for those who adore the glow of candlelight, behind each door is a beautifully scented tealight or mini filled votive chosen from the best-selling Yankee Candle fragrances to brighten your December days. **£49.99**, *yankeecandle.co.uk*

WIN
A Yankee Candle Advent Calendar on our Wish List, page 138



FOR HIM

Man's Stuff 24 Days Advent Calendar

Filled with grooming essentials all wrapped beautifully to make him feel special every day leading up to the festivities. **£35**, *boots.com*

FOR GARDENERS

Heirloom Seed Advent Calendar

An eco cotton sack contains 25 compostable envelopes each containing a packet of seeds – an ideal calendar for the ardent gardener. **£70**, *shegrowsveg.com*

THE MARVELLOUS LAND OF OZ
Tulip Fair
Munchkinland
Elphaba

COLLECTABLES

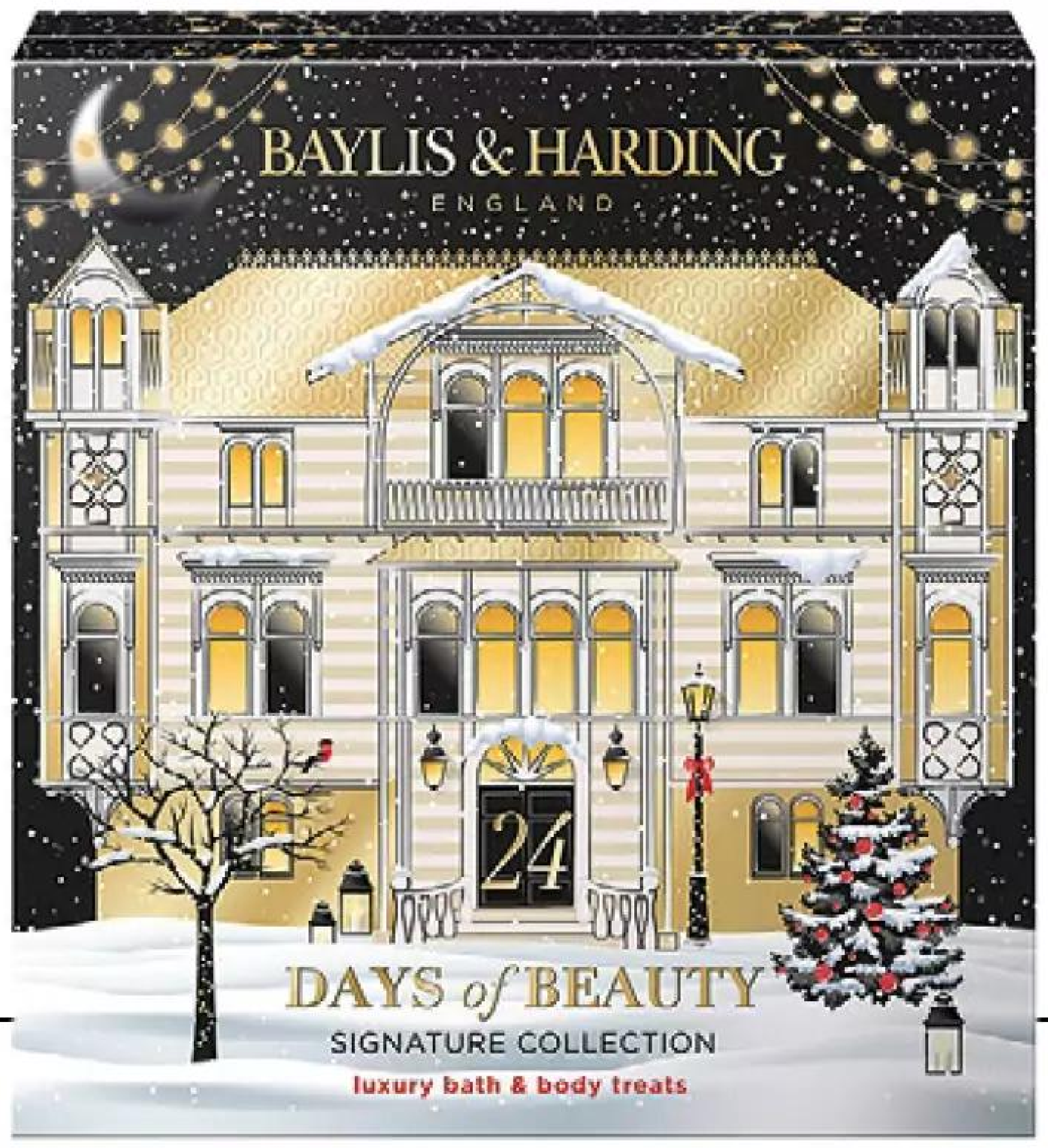
Wicked: For Good The Official Advent Calendar

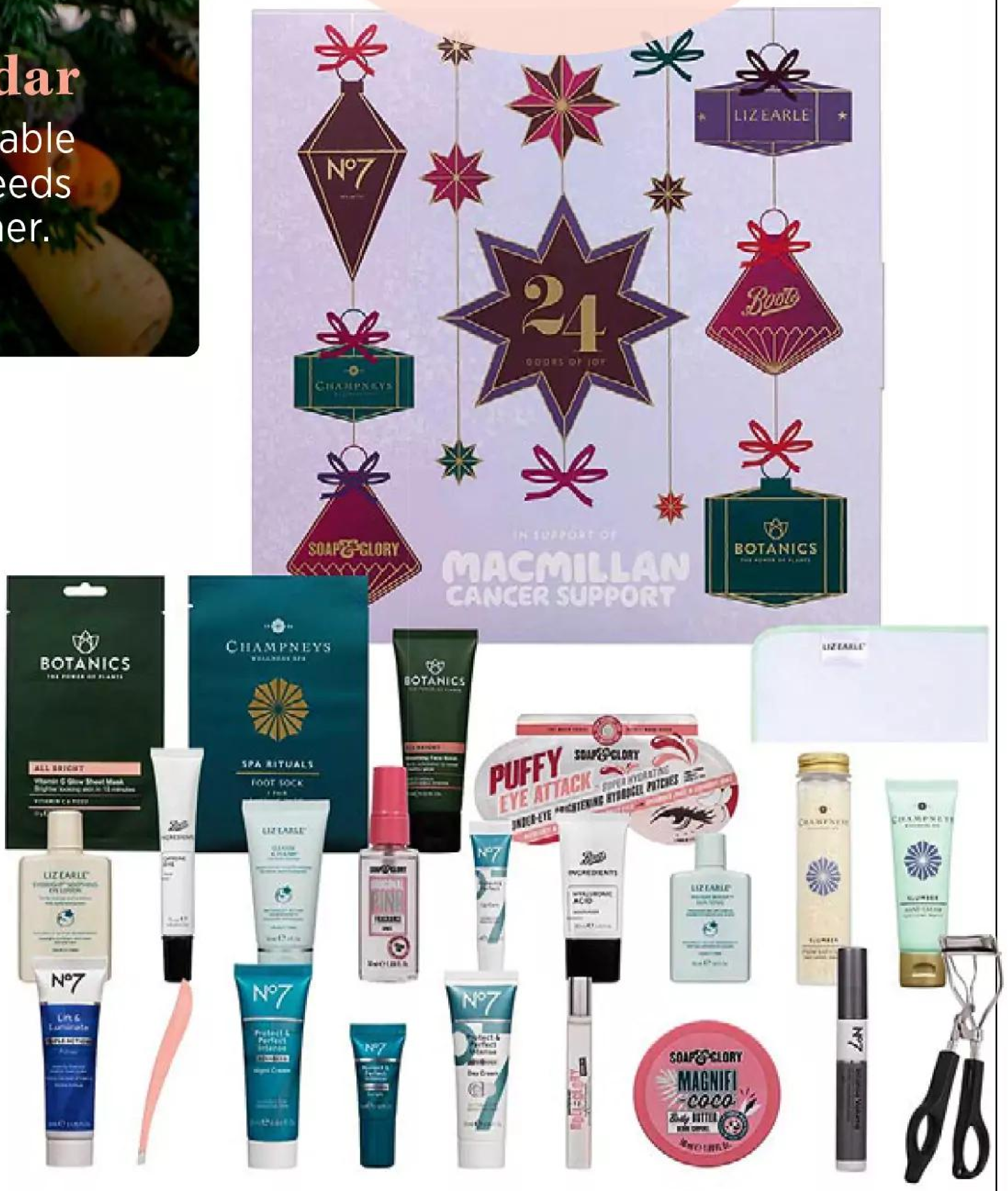
One for fans of the *Wicked* films, with 25 days of surprises from the Land of Oz – a fun celebration of the films. **£27.99**, *insighteditions.com*

SELF-LOVE

Signature 24 Days of Beauty Gift Set

Prepare to be truly pampered with Baylis & Harding goodies including bath and shower gifts, hand cream and body lotion and a surprise item. **£45**, *baylisandharding.com, amazon.co.uk, Next*


BAYLIS & HARDING
ENGLAND
24
DAYS of BEAUTY
SIGNATURE COLLECTION
luxury bath & body treats


No7
LIZ EARLE
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Boots
CHAMPNEYS
SOAP & GLORY
IN SUPPORT OF
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT
BOTANICS

FOR HER

Macmillan 24 Days of Joy Beauty Advent Calendar

Packed with 24 beauty treats from famous names, and £2 from every calendar sold goes to Macmillan. **£44**, *boots.com*

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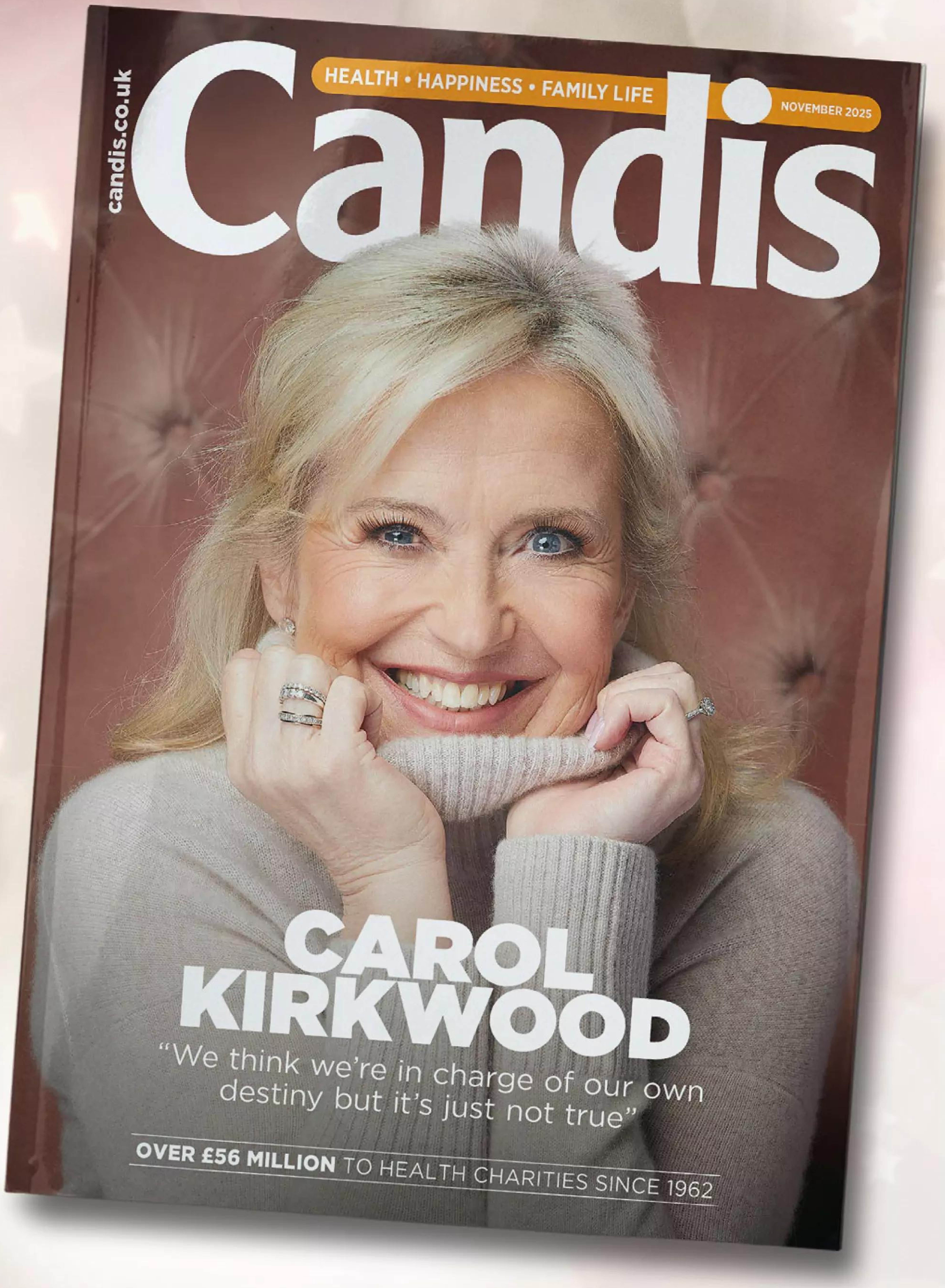
www.candis.co.uk/join



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HEALTH • HAPPINESS • FAMILY LIFE

NOVEMBER 2025

Candis

CAROL
KIRKWOOD

"We think we're in charge of our own
destiny but it's just not true"

OVER £56 MILLION TO HEALTH CHARITIES SINCE 1962

Woman for all seasons

Carol Kirkwood brings a ray of sunshine to our screens most mornings but, as Richard Barber discovers, a novel-writing career has opened up a new world of happiness for her

Forget the weather. Here's the news about Carol Kirkwood. The sunny breakfast forecaster is riding high. Her fifth work of fiction – *Meet Me at Sunset* – like its four predecessors, had no trouble nipping up the bestseller lists.

As fans of Carol's romantic novels will know ("I'm no Tolstoy," she says, "these are beach reads, pure escapism") this is a familiar tale of broken hearts, blackmail and betrayal, Hollywood glamour, closely guarded secrets and a last stab at happiness as the sun sets over the golden sands. "It's a fairy story," and she's not apologising.

As ever, she starts with the setting. This time, it's Majorca. "I love everything about it – the scenery, the beaches, the mountains, the food, the people."

Sitting in a favourite restaurant one night with husband Steve, her eye was caught by an elegant woman in her 50s, hair in a chignon, sitting upright, dining alone and drinking white wine from a slender glass.

Admits Carol, "I love people-watching. And my mind went into overdrive. I started fantasising about this woman's life and why she was on her own. I decided that she was going to be the main character in my next book."

Below Carol is a regular on the set of *BBC Breakfast*

Wednesday 01:00

"I put my grief into a compartment that I kept separate from my work… Work kept me going. It was simple: I had a public face and a private face"

Above left Chatting with the Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace

Above right Carol and Steve in 2023

Her loyal readership is predominantly female "although my dentist loves my books and he's a man". What about the main man in her life? In December 2023, Carol, 63, married – for the second time – serving police officer Steve Randall.

For 18 years, she was married to Jimmy Kirkwood – not the Northern Irish hockey player as is often reported, but a Scottish businessman. There was no dramatic ending to the marriage, she says – it just ran its course.

That said, it's not easy breaking up with your husband if you have a public profile. "I still had to be smiling Carol on-screen. I'd come off-air – we broadcast from the Blue Peter garden in those days – go to the Ladies, have a good cry and then have to reapply my eye make-up before stepping in front of the cameras again.

"In a funny way, though, it helped with the healing process. I put my grief into a compartment that I kept separate from my work, otherwise I'd have ended up in a puddle of tears. Work kept me going. It was simple: I had a public face and a private face."

Although she's one of eight children and would have loved a family of her own, it never happened. "Nor did the doctors ever tell us why." But she refuses to feel downhearted. "Well, just look at the life I've had. I couldn't have achieved half of it if I'd had children at home."

She refuses to compare her marriages. "I was very happy with Jimmy for many years and now I'm very happy with Steve," but she can't resist adding, "This one's a keeper, though." In September, he turned 50. Is she just a little bit relieved that his age now starts with a new number?

She roars with laughter. "I promise you, I never think about it. And nobody would pay it any attention if he was the one who was older than me. No, you

> "I still sometimes pinch myself. We think we're in charge of our own destiny but it's just not true. All of this came from nowhere"

can forget all about toyboys and cougars, so old-fashioned and sexist when you think about it."

He's now a part, loosely speaking, of his wife's novel-writing career. "If I feel I've hit a bit of a dead end, I'll ask Steve for his suggestions." And then it's on with the next one: once she's put the last full stop on a new novel, Carol releases her characters (from her head) to make way for the next cast. She's already working on book number six, set in the Cotswolds and New York at Christmas and due out next year.

Whichever way you slice it, Carol Kirkwood, weather forecaster, has invented a second, unrelated career for herself. "I still sometimes pinch myself. We think we're in charge of our own destiny but it's just not true. All of this came from nowhere."

Actually, it came from a man called Kerr MacRae, a publishing agent who cunningly identified Carol as someone with a loyal following who just might be able to tap into that popularity, given she knew how to string two words together. So it proved. And she loves her double life, "One keeps me fresh for the other."

She's certainly looking good on it, no mean achievement when you have to set your alarm for 2.45am Monday to Thursday in order to arrive at BBC Breakfast by 4.30am. "Well, thank you. But it gets harder all the time."

Over the last six months, she's lost half-a-stone. "Out of something bad has come

Below left At the 2016 TRIC awards with Charlie Stayt and Louise Minchin

Below right Being presented to Queen Elizabeth at the BBC

“Our dream, when we finally retire, is just to get in the car and head off into the wide blue yonder”

something good. At the beginning of the year, I was laid low with a nasty bout of food poisoning that kept me off-air.”

It transformed her attitude to food and eating. “I’d always been a real snacker. But I made a decision only to eat when I was hungry. For instance, I had pitta and humous at five o’clock yesterday afternoon and won’t have anything until two o’clock this afternoon.”

What will she eat then? “Whatever I fancy! But it’s likely to be protein – boiled eggs or chicken or pitta with rocket and tomatoes. And, if I want some chocolate after that, I’ll have some. It’s my main meal of the day. But then, I do 10,000 steps a day minimum, mostly on the 40-minute return journey on foot from the station to my house.”

In July, she finished her annual stint at Wimbledon despatching regular weather updates from SW19. “It’s one of my favourite events of the year although I never get to see any of the tennis.”

The weather has been kind this year. “It has, but I have to be careful. I can’t stand up and say there’s going to be lots of lovely sunshine tomorrow because that doesn’t suit everyone. If it’s very hot, which it certainly has been on and off this summer, it can be a real health hazard if you’re elderly with respiratory issues.”

So, how’s the rest of the year going to pan out? “Well, we do live on an island, which means we can have four seasons in a day. It’s pretty much impossible to predict with any accuracy more than about five days ahead.

“The reason we’ve had relatively settled conditions recently is because the jet stream has been to the north of the UK and not to the south. This year, the Mediterranean and Iberia have been the areas with storms and heavy rainfall as well as bouts of sweltering heatwaves.”

For all that, people habitually stop her in the supermarket wanting to know what the weather will be like three weeks

Below Forecasting the weather with a sunny smile on *BBC Breakfast*

Edinburgh
Belfast
Cardiff
London

PHOTOS NICKY JOHNSTON/CAMERA PRESS, ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK, BBC

Above left
With dance partner Pasha Kovalev on Strictly 2015

Above right
Chelsea Flower Show is an annual highlight

on Saturday when their son is getting married. And it can hit closer to home. "How bad do I look if I've invited friends for a barbecue and the heavens open?"

Still, the British obsession with weather means it's a busy life. Carol broadcast from the Chelsea Flower Show again this year and she was a guest of James Martin on his ITV Saturday morning cookery show in the summer.

Then she was off to the Highlands for *The One Show*, filming an item on the Glenfinnan Viaduct, which her maternal grandfather helped to build. She also gave a talk on a cruise of the Outer Hebrides in September.

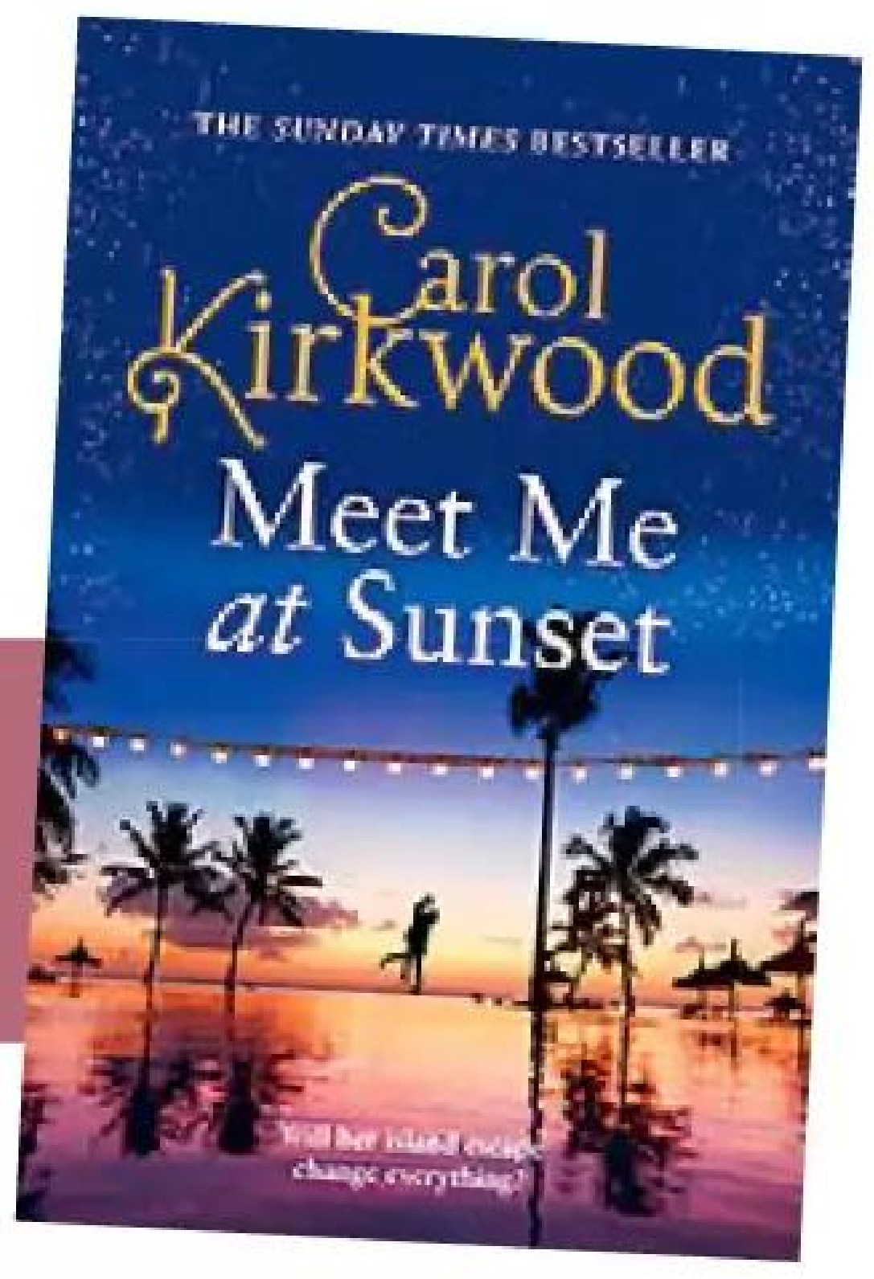
Any remaining unfulfilled ambitions? "Yes, I'd love to take part in *Race Across the World*. I'd be in charge of the budget; Steve would be chief boy scout looking after logistics. It would be such fun. Our dream, when we retire, is just to get in the car and head off into the wide blue yonder."

A long career on our TV screens with such regularity has involved one or two memorable moments. "There was the time a dog chose to relieve itself behind me on-air."

She also remembers when she was filmed holding two jugs of water. "One with the amount of rainfall we should have had; the other contained the amount we'd actually had.

"The late Bill Turnbull introduced the item by asking: 'Kirky' – he always called me Kirky – 'are you going to repeat your experiment for us?' To which I replied, 'Yes, I'll have my jugs out again in 15 minutes.' Bill was unable to speak after that; Mishal Husain had to rescue him."

Meet Me at Sunset by Carol Kirkwood (HarperCollins) is out now.



REUNITED AND IT FEELS SO GOOD

Happy reunion stories have a real feel-good factor. **Amy Pay** meets three women with heart-warming experiences to share

“MY BIRTH MUM FILLED KNOWLEDGE GAPS”

Katherine Samwell-Smith, reunited with her Chilean birth mum after more than 40 years

“International adoption was rare in the 1970s. I was born in 1976 and adopted in 1977 by my adoptive parents, Rosie and Paul, who already had my brother Nicholas. Rosie couldn’t have more children, but desperately wanted a little girl. She mentioned this to her friend, Loretta (my godmother), who suggested her parents in Chile, living near an orphanage, could help.

Chile was a difficult place in 1976 – Pinochet was in power; people were disappearing and unmarried women faced hardships. Loretta’s parents, Lucco and Margot, went to the orphanage on my adoptive parents’ behalf and wrote

to them saying, 'Choose the girl on the right in this photo; she has a lovely smile.' My parents trusted them completely.

I left the orphanage at three months old, lived with Lucco and Margot briefly, then flew first class to Gatwick Airport where my family met me. I owe Lucco and Margot my life. Everything that followed feels guided by fate.

I've always known I was adopted. I remember telling everyone at school about it and would find ways to turn my schoolwork into something about Chile. As a teenager, I gave positive adoption talks, sharing stories and calling for support and recognition for people connected to adoption. I studied anthropology at university, exploring how people become who they are, and my master's dissertation examined adoption. I've worked with adoption charities for years. It's safe to say adoption has guided my life and career.

I was 42 when I tried to find my birth mother during the pandemic. I never felt the need to search before; I didn't have that hole in my heart many adoptees feel. I was happy knowing my adoptive family loved me and that I was secure. It wasn't necessary, until I felt ready.

When my adoptive mum died in 2010, I received my adoption files. I'd always had them but hadn't examined them in detail. During the pandemic, I felt this quiet gnawing, a need to see them with fresh eyes. I only had half my birth mother's name (Ximena), her birth year, the orphanage where I came from and half my birth father's name. I started searching.

I wanted to meet my birth mum to say thank you, to show her I'd had a wonderful life. Becoming a mother myself made it even more powerful. Looking at my son Benji, I imagined what it took for her to give me up – a heartbreaking act, but an extraordinary expression of love. I needed her to know I was okay.

Finding her wasn't easy. Records in Chile were tightly controlled in 1976. I contacted my Chilean orphanage and consulates, did DNA tests and explored legal routes to try to locate her. In the end, it was a Facebook group that helped me. Out of the 320 cases they'd opened, 294 made contact with their birth parents. Six months after contacting the group, I got a text: 'We have found your birth mother'.

It was like a fairytale. If I'd died that day, I would've felt life had come full

> **“BECOMING A MOTHER MYSELF MADE IT EVEN MORE POWERFUL. LOOKING AT MY SON BENJI, I IMAGINED WHAT IT TOOK FOR HER TO GIVE ME UP – A HEARTBREAKING ACT, BUT AN EXTRAORDINARY EXPRESSION OF LOVE”**

circle – adopted by my parents then, now finding her. I started FaceTiming my birth mum, helped by my Chilean cousins. Communication was tricky, as my Spanish is basic but, with pre-written messages and support from others, it worked.

In November 2023, on my birthday, I met my birth mum in person. I went to Chile with my best friend. We travelled to the town of Chanco, where my birth mum, her sister, my cousin and her children were waiting. It was so overwhelming and emotional, but utterly wonderful. Seeing my birth mum laugh, watching her show care for me through small gestures and getting to meet the family was extraordinary. My daughter Sophie looks remarkably like her cousin Emilia. The synchronicities, the similarities, the love – the whole thing felt like fate. Meeting my birth mum filled many knowledge gaps I had about my past, especially some about my birth father and her circumstances. We still chat over FaceTime.

Adoptees’ stories aren’t always what they seem; it’s a Pandora’s box. My adoptive dad warned me that finding answers could open more questions than it could answer, and he was right. But the experience was healing. The reunion was one of the hardest, most emotional and most extraordinary moments of my life.

“STORIES LIKE THIS IS WHY WE NEVER GIVE UP”

Lisa Dean from Nottinghamshire reunited Sue Johnson, 79, with her dog who'd been missing for three years

Our charity, Beauty's Legacy (beautyslegacy.co.uk), reunites owners with missing animals. It began in April 2016 after my cat Beauty went missing. After a week, a lady gave me £150 to put up as a reward. One morning, I updated Facebook, mentioning the reward to encourage people to look. In the afternoon, a man rang saying he had Beauty. When I got there, she looked so ill. Sadly, she died a few hours later. I returned to the man's house with flowers and the cheque. He took the cheque, left the flowers and banked the money.

It opened my eyes to pet theft. My way of dealing with grief was to develop Beauty's Legacy. Nine years later, we've reunited over 3,200 animals with owners and have volunteers across England and Wales. We have drone pilots, professional equipment and a huge team of volunteers.

In August, we reunited Sue with her sausage dog, Archie, who'd been missing for three years. Sue contacted us when Archie was stolen, aged just 14 weeks. She's in Somerset, so our local team searched with the police. We did the usual – door-knocking, checking CCTV, putting up posters and getting national and local news coverage. If the trail goes cold, the police close the file. We stay in touch and continue to support the campaign. Sue had a trying time, made harder when she lost her husband a few months after Archie disappeared. Throughout the years, we regularly checked for Archie on websites that sell animals and kept our communications campaigns alive.

Fast forward to August 2025. Someone rang me saying, ‘I've got a sausage dog and I've looked online and I think it's Archie.’ They sent photos to compare their dog's markings with ones Archie had as a puppy, and they matched. We arranged to meet in public. They handed the dog over and left. His microchip confirmed he was Archie.

We don't have much information, but we believe he'd been with a family as a stud dog. He had long claws, was overweight and had become afraid of men. He hadn't had the best time. Archie settled back into life with Sue easily. Things weren't exactly the same as when he left as Sue's husband had died, and there was another sausage dog, Freddie, in the house. But Sue and the dogs are thrilled to be together. The two dogs love each other's company.

There are many animals that still need finding. Over 1,800 are reported missing or stolen each year, and we take roughly five new cases a day. Stories like Sue and Archie's are why we never give up.

“WE’RE DIFFERENT PEOPLE NOW, BUT WE STILL LIKE EACH OTHER’S COMPANY”

Barbara Chorley, 79, from Kendal, had a chance reunion with one of her childhood friends after more than 60 years

“I’ve lived in Kendal since I was a child; I went to school here, brought up two children and now live here on my own. I loved primary school. I didn’t like secondary school, so I left as soon as I could. With no qualifications, I got a job in an insurance office and became a chartered insurer in the 1980s. When the company was taken over by another company, I took early retirement aged 53.

I’d planned a year off when I retired, but suddenly my parents needed my help. My daughter had four boys, too, so there was plenty for me to do. I felt really useful. Now I feel I’m not needed as much.

I’d helped out with Age UK projects locally. In June, they invited me to go on a Stagecoach trip to The World of Beatrix Potter Museum in Windermere. I was enjoying the day, surrounded by friendly people of a similar age. Everybody was talking, then when we got off the bus I noticed someone staring at me. She looked at me, then said, ‘Hello, Barbara!’

I had no idea who it was at first. Then I realised: it was my old schoolfriend,

> “REUNITING WITH SOMEBODY AFTER ALL THAT TIME IS A BIT STRANGE, BUT REALLY NICE. THE WAY WE REMEMBER THE SAME THINGS IS GREAT”

Brenda Parry. It was uncanny. We talked all day after that. We reminisced about school, the people we knew and what had happened in the 68 years since.

I’ve fond memories of meeting Brenda. It was my first day at primary school, and our teacher showed us how to make cardboard clocks with moving hands. We stayed friends throughout that school.

My grandparents – who I often stayed with – lived near Brenda, so I’d walk there with Brenda after school. If I was with my grandparents at the weekend, Brenda would come to their house and we’d play in the garden. We thought we could do the high jump, so my grandad balanced a cane in the garden for us to jump over. We loved that. Around the age of 11, we went to different secondary schools. Our paths never crossed again, until the bus trip.

Reuniting with somebody after all that time is a bit strange, but really nice. The way we remember the same things is great. We’re completely different people now, but we still like each other’s company and we both have cars and independence.

Brenda volunteered with Age UK when she lost her husband, hence why she was on the trip. These trips are fun but also important. Everything seems to be changing; I’m dependent on grandchildren to teach me new things, but I understand they’ve got their own lives and they’re not always available. Meeting other people my age who also feel lonely sometimes, including Brenda, is lovely.

Me and Brenda have had telephone conversations since meeting. We’re hoping to go on more coach trips – and we’ll sit together this time! ”

Candis BIG GIVE 2025

FIGHT FOR CHANGE

Charlotte Badescu, 35 from Liverpool, explains how Target Ovarian Cancer is helping to save lives

When Charlotte got married in July 2021, she was excited for the future. "My husband and I had had a difficult few years working as doctors during the Covid-19 pandemic, but as things improved we were thrilled to tie the knot. We were at a good point in our lives and felt ready to start a family."

Charlotte came off the contraceptive pill and didn't have a period for three months. "I was taking pregnancy test after test, but they were all negative. During an appointment with my GP to talk about work-related stress I mentioned off-hand that my periods hadn't come back. We also talked about a slight change in my bowel habit, which we thought might be stress-related irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). She sent me for blood tests and found my hormone levels were very abnormal."

More tests included a CA125 blood test, used to detect ovarian cancer. "The CA125 was normal but my hormones had risen even further. A gynaecologist recommended repeating the blood tests in a few months. However, my GP decided to send me for a pelvic ultrasound scan. I remember looking at the sonographer and seeing her face fall the moment she started the scan."

The next day, Charlotte's GP asked her to come to the surgery. "She told me I had a 16cm mass occupying most of my pelvis, which appeared to originate from my right ovary. She said it looked cancerous. I was referred to gynae-oncology. I felt sick and panic stricken."

Charlotte had CT scans, MRI pelvis scans and more blood tests. "I was told it looked like a malignant granulosa cell tumour (GCT), which is a rare type of ovarian cancer. It was hard not knowing what was going on, how much it had spread and what the plan would be. The whole time I was also aware that my pelvis was full of cancer and it was growing day by day."

Charlotte's gynae-oncologist gave her the options of removing everything

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ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.
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> **“I’VE TRIED TO FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES AND THE WAY IN WHICH I CAN USE MY UNIQUE EXPERIENCE AS BOTH A DOCTOR AND A CANCER PATIENT TO HELP OTHERS”**

gynaecological along with the normal and full cancer surgery, or a staged approach, starting with removing the tumour with one ovary and tube and then returning for ‘completion surgery’. “I remember looking at my husband with tears in my eyes as I told my gynae-oncologist that I would accept the potential risk of death in order to choose the ‘fertility sparing’ approach.”

Charlotte had surgery in December 2021. “Physically I did really well. However, it was a very difficult time emotionally. There was a surge in Covid-19 cases, so my husband wasn’t allowed to visit me during the five days I was in hospital. I was at Liverpool Women’s Hospital, which is also a maternity hospital, so saw babies and pregnant women everywhere I went and I desperately wished I was in their shoes instead.”

It was confirmed Charlotte had had a granulosa cell tumour, and that it appeared to have not yet spread (stage 1A). “I felt really lucky, as my left ovary was unaffected and I didn’t need any more treatment at that point.”

In February 2022, Charlotte underwent a round of IVF in an attempt to freeze embryos in case of future recurrence, but she had disappointing results. However, a few months later, she found out she was pregnant naturally. “We welcomed our miracle baby girl, Annabelle Rose, in August 2023. We are also now expecting our second baby, due in November 2025. I’m in awe of my body’s resilience and find

motherhood an incredibly rewarding experience.

"Luckily, I haven't needed any more treatment since my surgery – just regular monitoring – but obviously there's this question hanging over me about further preventative surgery after this pregnancy. If I have my other ovary removed, I'm going to be plunged into a surgical menopause with all the health risks that come with that, especially as I can't take HRT."

For now, Charlotte is concentrating on making the most of her life. "As well as becoming a mother, I have been lucky enough to have had some amazing professional opportunities over the last few years. After my surgery, I started up an exercise regime to get my strength back and decided to sign up to do the Three Peaks Challenge as both a goal for myself and to raise money and awareness for a charity supporting people with ovarian cancer.

"I was vaguely aware of a number of different ovarian cancer charities through my job, but I wanted to fundraise for a charity that was not only about raising awareness but also involved in research and academia, healthcare professional education and improving treatment. When I started reading about Target Ovarian Cancer, their work really resonated with me and I knew it was the right fit to fundraise for."

Since then, Charlotte has become a GP Ambassador for the charity. "Having a cancer diagnosis changes you forever, as you have this thing hanging over you for the rest of your life and you'll never be the carefree person you were before, but it has really made me stop and rethink my priorities. I've tried to focus on the positives and the way in which I can use my unique experience as both a doctor and a cancer patient to help others. Helping to raise awareness for the charity feels like what I should be doing with my life.

"I've actively campaigned on behalf of Target Ovarian Cancer, including three visits to the Houses of Parliament, where I took part in the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Ovarian Cancer and Menopause. I've also delivered numerous educational talks to GPs and other healthcare professionals, as well as sessions for the general public aimed at raising awareness about ovarian cancer, and I've contributed to the creation of various resources and joined the charity's Primary Care Advisory Board.

"In September last year I started a role working for the Greater Manchester

"I REMEMBER LOOKING AT THE SONOGRAPHER AND SEEING HER FACE FALL THE MOMENT SHE STARTED THE SCAN"

TARGET OVARIAN
TARGET OVARIAN CANCER
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Cancer Alliance, in the early diagnosis team as a GP specialising in the early diagnosis of gynaecological cancers. In March I was in charge of organising a campaign with them, Target Ovarian Cancer and the Dianne Oxberry Trust, called This Van Can, where a van drove around all the boroughs for Ovarian Cancer Awareness month and women could come onboard, talk to the ambassadors and receive information and advice about symptoms.

"There is a huge lack of awareness about ovarian cancer, as it's not as common as breast or prostate cancer and not so tangible where someone can see or feel it, so it is one of the worst diagnosed cancers in terms of early diagnosis. I feel so grateful I was given that early diagnosis before my cancer had spread, and I feel passionate about helping other women have the same experience. The work the charity is doing to raise awareness, educate healthcare professionals and fund research is so important to get those early diagnoses that save lives."

THE CANDIS BIG GIVE TARGET OVARIAN CANCER

AMOUNT RAISED: £21,400

♥ Target Ovarian Cancer focuses on getting women with ovarian cancer into treatment as quickly as possible to increase the chance of survival. It works with GPs to make sure they know the signs and symptoms to improve diagnosis, campaigns to make sure women know the signs and symptoms, and funds research into new and better treatments. It also has a range of support services for anybody affected by ovarian cancer, including a phone line led by registered nurses, digital communities, and its website.

♥ The money raised in the Candis Big Give will be used as part of the charity's early diagnosis programme during 2025. It will increase public awareness of symptoms and push UK Governments to fund awareness campaigns. The charity has trained more than half of UK GPs specifically in the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer. It also works with the NHS to pilot different ways to get women diagnosed and into treatment. For example, it has created a computer system to put a flag on the GP's screen if they are diagnosing an older woman with IBS for the first time, to say they should also be referred for an ovarian cancer test.

♥ Visit **targetovariancancer.org.uk**

WHAT TARGET OVARIAN CANCER MEANS TO ME

Candis
BIG GIVE
2025

Anna Cogger, the charity's Director of Fundraising and Engagement, tells us what makes her job special

"When I was a teenager, my gran was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She was really lucky and got treatment, and she is thankfully still healthy 20 years later, but that's not everyone's story. Each year, 7,400 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer and one in five of these are going to be so ill by the time of diagnosis that they get no cancer treatment at all. It's a really brutal disease that affects everyone – women and men who are affected by their wives, mothers and sisters – but doesn't get spoken about enough. Due to my personal experience, I really wanted to work somewhere where I could be a part of changing that, which is what the work of Target Ovarian Cancer is all about.

As the Director of Fundraising and Engagement, I look after all our fundraising, marketing and communications, which are essentially all the ways we engage with the people who want to help us as an organisation. For me, the best part about working for the charity is getting to meet and know this community, as they're inspiring people. Most of them have a personal experience, whether they have been diagnosed themselves or have a friend, partner or family member who has been diagnosed, and often they have lost a loved one to the disease.

They work with us to change the story by campaigning for us, going to Parliament, giving us money, running marathons, checking our support information, and getting their MPs to sign up to whatever we're calling for in Parliament at the time.

Without that community of people, we just couldn't do what we do. When I get to meet those people, sit and have lunch with them and talk about their story, I feel so grateful. I think that's the most inspiring thing anyone can do."

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WHO CARES FOR THE DEMENTIA CARERS?

Caring for someone with dementia can feel overwhelming and frustrating but there is help out there to help you negotiate your feelings, says **Flic Everett**

We all know someone whose life has been affected by dementia. It's the UK's leading cause of death and still has no cure, despite medical developments. Last year, according to the World Health Organisation, 57 million people around the world had dementia, yet one in three has never been diagnosed.

There are more than 100 different types of dementia, usually affecting over-65s, but all cause damage to brain cells, and affect memory, understanding, speed of thought and mood. And it's not only those with the disease who suffer. Caring for a loved one with dementia can be very difficult, as their personality slips away to be replaced by fear and confusion.

Here's what to expect as a carer – and how to find the right help.

EARLY STAGES

If you suspect your loved one is showing signs of forgetfulness, it may not be dementia – other conditions can affect memory. But if you're unsure, says Rachel Higginbottom of peopleoocare.com, a platform which connects carers, "Don't wait to ask questions. Dementia UK and Alzheimer's Society UK are both brilliant places for early advice. It's never too early to start learning about the condition or planning ahead."

Dementia is a progressive disease, so symptoms will inevitably worsen over time. Sometimes, years can pass before a diagnosis, as people may simply put symptoms down to 'senior moments'. GPs will often look for a cluster of symptoms before suggesting a test. Emma Taylor of Alzheimer's Research UK lists, "Forgetting recent events, names and faces, repeating things frequently, not being sure about the date or time of day and problems with paying attention or making simple decisions." Issues might even include getting lost, "mostly in places that are new", mood changes – generally negative – and finding it hard to locate the right words.

People may also put familiar items in the wrong place, like keys in the fridge.

It's important to go to the GP if you're worried. "They will do blood tests and a memory test to help find out the cause," says Emma Taylor.

"For carers, coming to terms with a diagnosis of dementia is hard because it is often seen as an inevitable decline," says therapist Sally Potter, who works for an organisation supporting dementia carers. "Often there has been a long journey to getting a diagnosis, and then difficulty establishing what support may be available," she adds. "Different types of dementia present and progress in different ways, so having information is important, but when a carer is stressed, that information can be hard to take in. The diagnosis can feel shocking and isolating, so carers often struggle with feeling lonely." At this point, it's important to speak to friends and colleagues so they understand what's happening, and can offer you support.

PROGRESSION

Ideally, before this stage you'll have held the tricky conversations about care, and – often a source of tension – driving. "One of the most common questions people ask after a diagnosis of dementia is whether they can still drive," Emma says. After a diagnosis, it's essential to inform the DVLA. They and your GP will assess driving capacity and make a decision, which will be subject to regular review. If it's advised that they should no longer drive, this can place an extra burden on carers. "You might also notice

WHERE TO GET HELP

The GP can connect you with specialists and social services to discuss what your loved one needs. For personal support, however, try:

Alzheimer's Society offers a dementia Support Line (0333 150 3456) and online resources for information and advice.

Dementia UK provides specialised dementia nurse support through the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline (0800 888 6678).

Alzheimer's Research UK focuses on research and provides information on dementia and how to get involved in research.

Age UK offers an advice line (0800 678 1602) and support services at local Age UK branches.

Carers UK provides helpline support for carers (0800 808 7777).

Dementia Carers Count offers a carer support line (0800 652 1102).

Independent Age provides a helpline (0800 319 6789).

growing distress or anxiety, or difficulty with self-care," says Rachel. "As dementia progresses, people can experience good days and more challenging ones."

This is when it's vital to discuss what the person with dementia wants. Would they eventually prefer a carer to move in, or to be supported in a fully adapted care environment? What's important to them in terms of autonomy and dignity?

"Ask before it's too late and write it down!" urges Rachel. "Whether it's keeping up a nightly whiskey, regular nail appointments, or attending church on Sundays, it all matters. These details help families and future care teams keep the person at the heart of the care."

With Alzheimer's, adds Emma Taylor, "The speed of progression varies. Childhood memories tend to fade last," she says. "This means they may get confused about where they live or ask to see their parents. Going through photo albums of important events in their life can help them to reminisce at this stage."

For carers, this is when the demands on your time, and the worry of keeping the dementia patient safe, can be draining.

"Finding time to do things for yourself is difficult when caring for someone with dementia," says Sally Potter. "Sleep patterns can be disturbed, so the loved one and the carer may both be tired," she adds. "Behaviour can be unpredictable, so even well-laid plans may be disrupted, leading to frustration." The loved one with dementia may behave differently to their old self, she points out, and that can be really tough for a carer. "Even simple changes, such as a change in appetite, or likes and dislikes mean making new accommodations."

> **“THE JOB OF LOOKING AFTER SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA AS THE ILLNESS PROGRESSES CAN BE RELENTLESS”**

MOVING ON

As the disease reaches its later stages – which may take years, particularly if it can be mitigated by the right drugs – sufferers can become “restless, aggressive or anxious,” says Emma Taylor. “Some may experience paranoia and feel fearful or suspicious. They may even hallucinate.”

It is, however, possible for many sufferers to retain some independence, says Rachel Higginbottom, especially with the help of assistive technology, community services, and routines. “Over time people may need help with tasks like cooking, driving, managing medication, or bathing safely.”

This is when loved ones and carers will need more formalised support. Says Rachel. “You might have a family member nearby who checks in daily, or you might need to explore residential, nursing or home-care options. A local authority assessment is a good starting point, but people can also explore options like dementia-friendly day centres, respite care or coffee mornings.”

This is the point when it’s essential to pay attention to your own needs, too, says Sally Potter. “Without support or sufficient information, carers may feel angry and guilty, frustrated and alone. The job of looking after someone with dementia as the illness progresses can be relentless,” she goes on. “As sleep changes, and if communication becomes difficult, resentment creeps in. There is often no opportunity for a break, so carers can ‘burn out’ – reaching a point where they are in crisis.”

Deciding to organise full-time care can mean “a sense of guilt, mixed with sadness and relief,” says Sally. “Carers, including those outside the family, can experience feelings of grief and loss.” If you were living with the person, whether spouse, parent or sibling, “The transition from caring 24/7 to being alone at home may feel especially hard.”

This is the point where it is essential to refocus on your own needs, whether that’s time with friends, exercise or hobbies you’ve neglected. It’s a journey nobody wants to take, but you’ve done all you can – and now it’s time to embrace your own needs once again.

ILLUSTRATIONS ISTOCK

“IT WAS EXHAUSTING FOR EVERYONE”

Alice Richards*, 53, helped to care for her father when he developed dementia aged 79

“When you find out it’s dementia, you realise there were signs from years ago. My mum dismissed them as just ageing – my dad also concealed his symptoms for a long time, as he was very proud and independent. He stopped getting jokes, and would occasionally argue with my husband, John, about silly things. He’d become belligerent and incoherent, but he always liked a drink in the evening, so we assumed he was just a bit tipsy. It took about eight years to get a diagnosis.

He had vascular dementia, so he began to shuffle rather than walk. Once, he slipped from the kerb and broke his foot. It did feel that we were gradually losing him. He couldn’t judge distances, but he wouldn’t admit he was frightened.

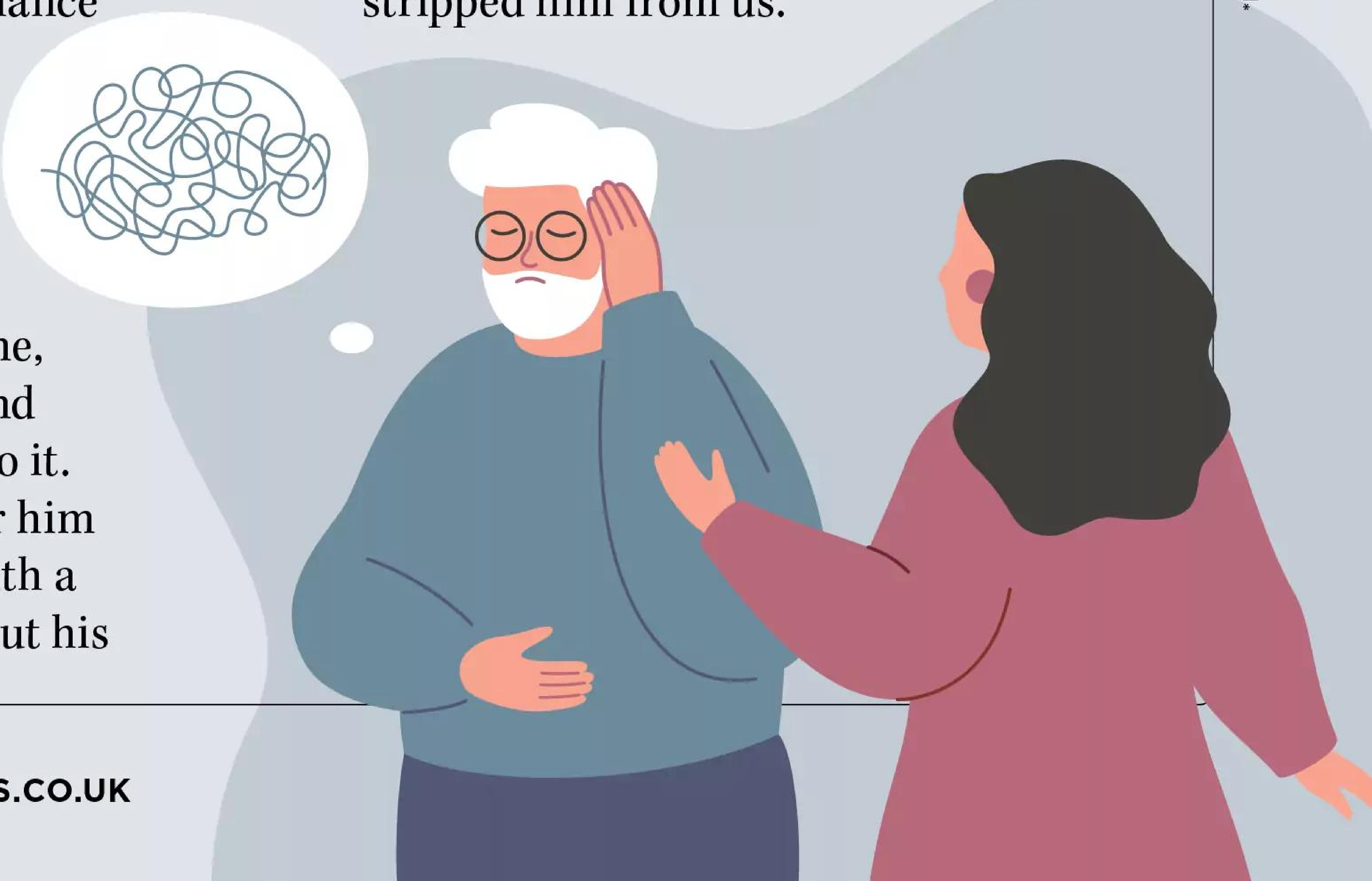
I began to feel very sad – he’d always been such a strong, stubborn man and it was awful to witness his decline. He’d always done the home finance stuff, but he had bought insurance from a scammer, which took years to sort out. We took over the admin, which took up a lot of time, and Dad didn’t understand why he could no longer do it.

Whenever I looked after him it was like negotiating with a toddler – he’d refuse to put his shoes on or hide things in the house. He’d hover near my mum constantly – she was so independent and felt very claustrophobic. He would get family members mixed up and thought my children were me and my sister.

He became less verbal, and very frustrated – that was the worst stage because I felt I needed to protect my mum from his anger. It was exhausting for him and everyone else. Dad would wander off and get lost. He began to go to council daycare three days a week, which was a godsend, but he lost his speech and couldn’t say what he needed.

We had a terrible Christmas and were looking into permanent care when Dad suffered a fatal heart attack. It was almost a blessing – because then we could grieve him properly and remember who he’d been before the illness stripped him from us.”

*NAME CHANGED



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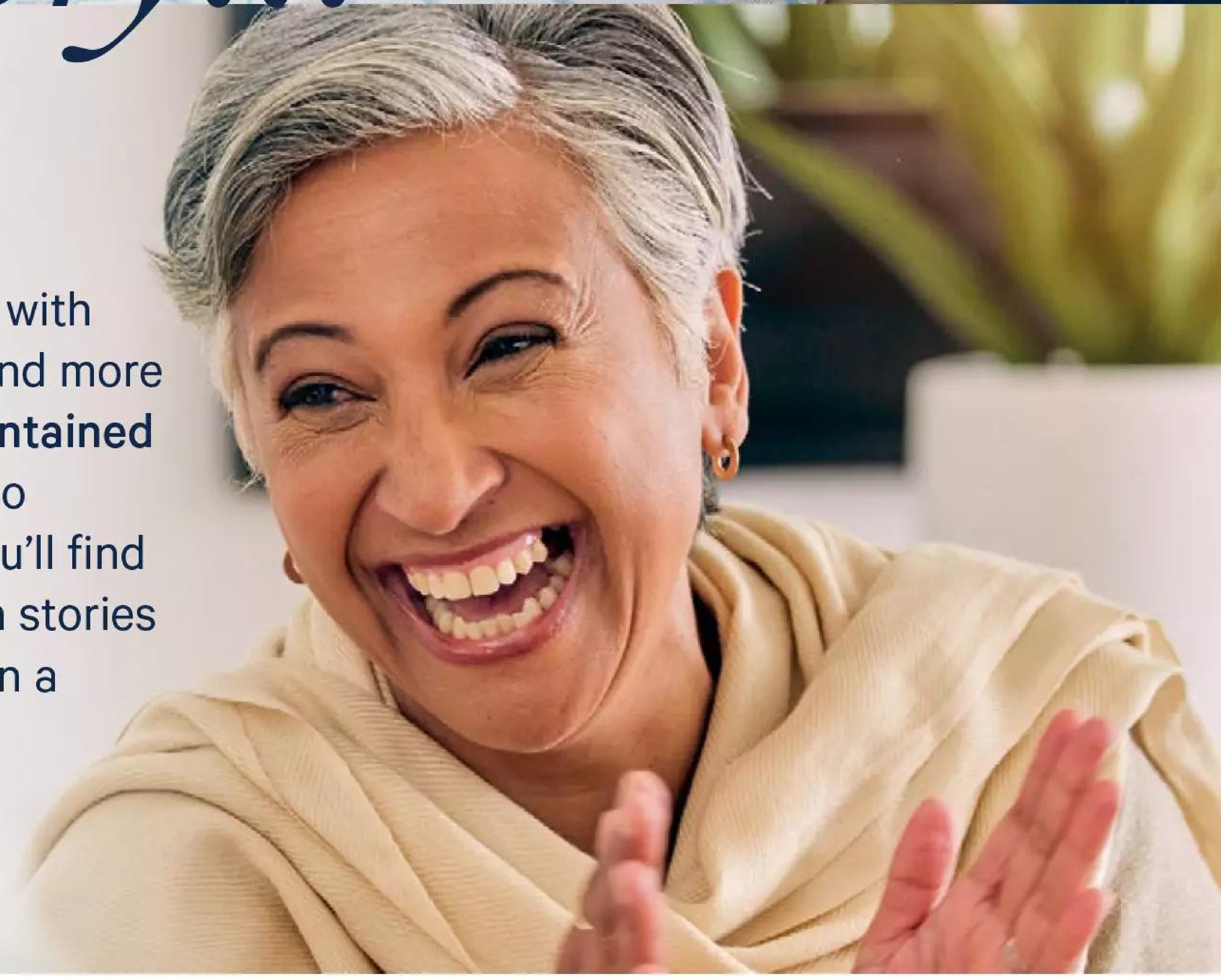

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Retirement Living Awards Winner

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THE THINGS THAT MADE ME

GARETH MALONE OBE

Gareth Malone galvanised the British choral scene through his award-winning BBC series, concert tours and recordings. He lives in London with wife Becky and their three children, and is celebrating his 50th birthday this November with a UK tour

OPERA: THE MIKADO

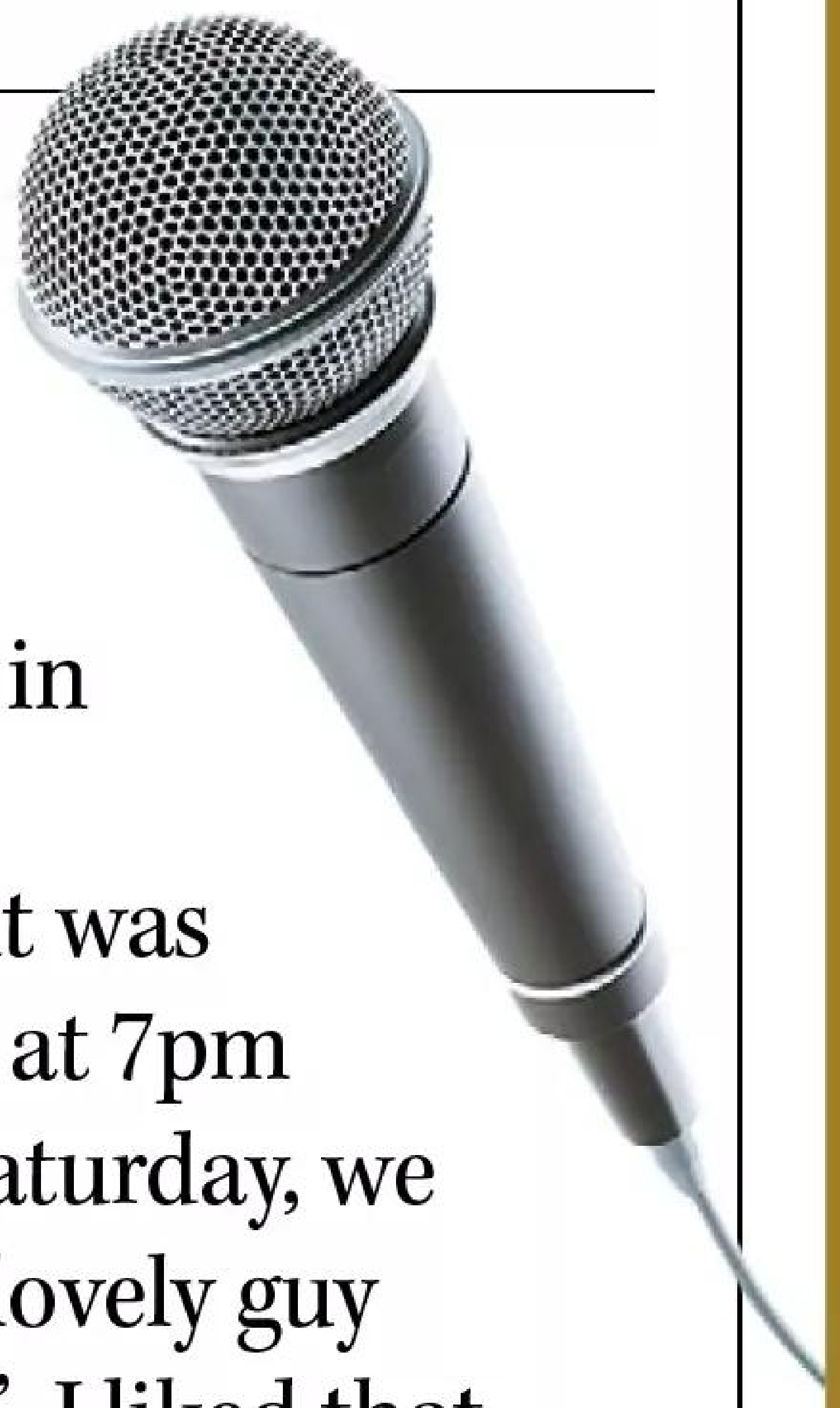
I remember my dad taking me to my first opera – a D'Oyly Carte production of the *Mikado* – when I was very young, and really enjoying it. I must already have heard, and absorbed, a lot of the music. My parents had met through their love of Gilbert and Sullivan, and their love of music and their sense of fun had a big impact on me as a child.

Mum, now 73, still sings in a choir, and Dad, 83, still knows the entire Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire by heart. You just need to mention something that triggers a line of lyrics in their minds, and suddenly off the two of them will go, singing out loud.

LIFE LESSON: MUSIC

Looking back, I can see that, having always been around music, and learning to play different instruments, taught me essential life lessons without me realising it at the time. None of us can play a new piece of music perfectly on the first attempt – and week after week would pass with me seemingly making no progress. But I kept on practising and I'd eventually find myself getting it right.

It's an amazing lesson for a child – and it certainly was for me: learning to deal with adversity by meeting it head-on and not running away.



MANTRA: "ONWARDS AND UPWARDS"

My first real experience of working with amateur musical theatre enthusiasts was in 1998, when I was 23. I was the assistant director on the *24-Hour Mad Show* – and it was mad! Everyone gathered for the first time at 7pm on a Friday evening and, by 7pm on the Saturday, we had a show to put on. The director was a lovely guy whose motto was "onwards and upwards". I liked that and thought I would take it away as my own motto in life – because there are always ups and downs to overcome.

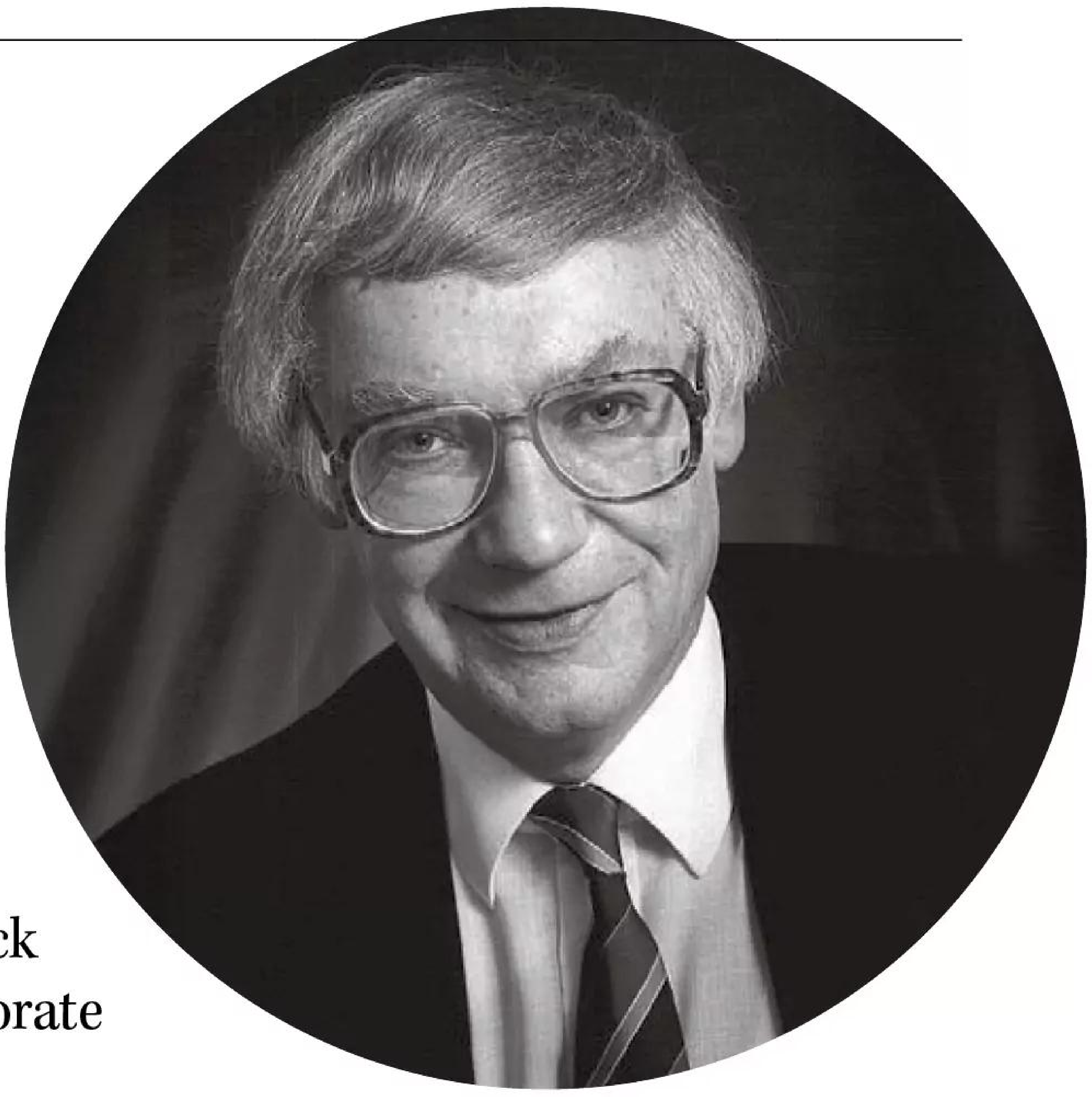
On this show, I worked with people who arrived saying, "Oh no, I couldn't possibly sing that..." Yet they were on stage singing solos 24 hours later because we'd boosted their confidence and encouraged them to keep on going.

MENTORS: MY PIANO TEACHERS

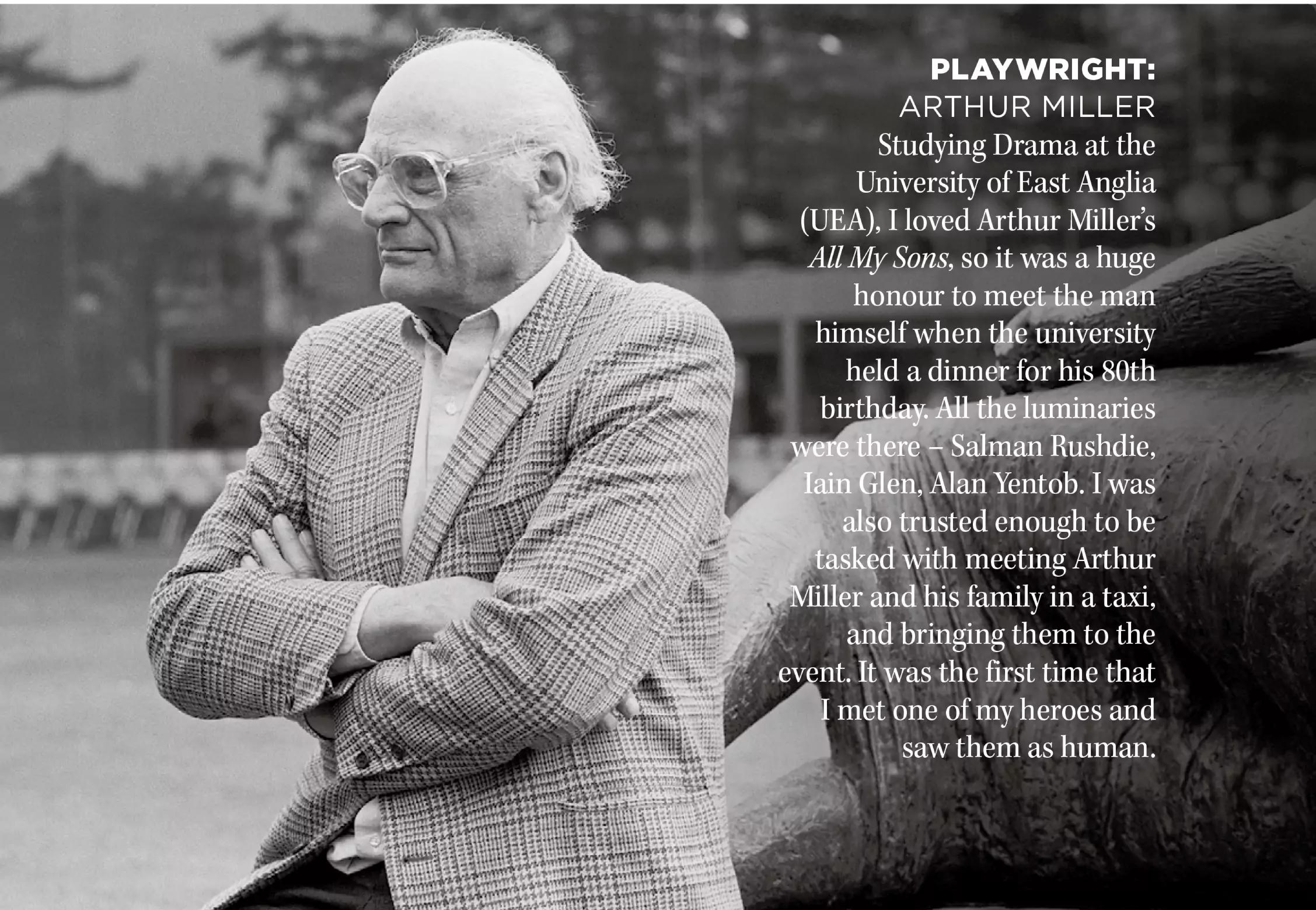
My first piano teacher, when I was seven, was amazing. She'd have little concerts at her house, and, though it was so nerve-racking having to play in front of all her bigger students, she taught me to have the confidence to do this. Later, as a teenager, I had another teacher who said she wouldn't keep me on if, by the following week, I couldn't play the C-sharp minor scale – tricky on a piano – that she'd set me for homework. I was in the middle of my GCEs, but I got there.

HONOUR: MY HONORARY DOCTORATE

The late great Professor Peter Aston was head of Music when I was at UEA and, though I was studying Drama, I was in the choir, and I spent a lot of time in the Music department – writing compositions for productions we put on. It was Professor Aston who introduced me to Bach's choral music properly – and all the John Elliott Gardiner recordings. Those recordings really changed my life, so it was very special to go back in 2010 when I was awarded an honorary doctorate for making a difference to other people's lives.



"Once I'd made a pledge to put music first, it affected every career decision that I made"



PLAYWRIGHT: ARTHUR MILLER

Studying Drama at the University of East Anglia (UEA), I loved Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, so it was a huge honour to meet the man himself when the university held a dinner for his 80th birthday. All the luminaries were there – Salman Rushdie, Iain Glen, Alan Yentob. I was also trusted enough to be tasked with meeting Arthur Miller and his family in a taxi, and bringing them to the event. It was the first time that I met one of my heroes and saw them as human.

BRITISH ACADEMY TELEVISION AWARDS

ETHIC: MAKE IT WORK

I've worked for amazing institutions and people – but only by thinking hard about the jobs I'd accept. From 1997 (when I left university) to 2007 (when *The Choir* won its first BAFTA) I had ten years of bitty jobs. I didn't know exactly where I was heading, but I knew I was moving in the right direction. In 2000, I moved from a teaching job in Bournemouth to London. I was studying at the Royal Academy of Music and also earning £50 a week as a part-time assistant at the English National Opera. I just had this drive to keep going forward. I was living in a tiny box in someone's house, but I used my link with the ENO as leverage to get other work with Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera House. Then, when I was working in an education job with the London Symphony Orchestra, the production company making *The Choir* got in touch… and the rest is history. I was in the right place at the right time – but I had worked hard to be in that place. Getting to that point was hard grit.

PHILOSOPHY: THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS LUCK

I don't believe in luck. I see life and ambition as a sequence of dominoes that fall into place. People won't just find you and give you a break if you don't make yourself available. Once I'd made a pledge to put music first, that affected every career decision that I made, and every job that I took. After a short time selling ice creams, I didn't take a single job that wasn't going to progress my career in some way. If it wasn't going to do that, I would say no to it – however much I may have needed the money.

WAKE-UP CALL: THE CHOIR

Despite appearances, I was 30 when we made the first season of *The Choir* with an all-boys school. I had a bit of experience teaching and auditioning children, but with a TV crew following me, I ended up auditioning the entire school. Half of them had no interest in music. They just wanted to be on telly. But I will never forget what one boy – Jerry – said to me, "If you have the right teacher, you can do anything." I'd had the same experience. My teacher Mr Carlstone always believed in me and encouraged me to believe in myself. If I told him I'd composed something, he'd say, "That's terrific, let's have it in Assembly".

> **"A good instrument feels like a special companion. I still have the guitar I bought at 16"**

COLLECTABLES: INSTRUMENTS

I love getting to know individual instruments – and a good instrument comes to feel like a special companion. I still have the guitar that I bought when I was 16, which sparked a lifelong fascination with buying instruments. I have another beautiful guitar that I bought 15 years ago, which is getting better and better – as well as ukeleles, violins and percussive instruments like shakers, cabasas and guiros, while my most recent purchase is an accordion.

PHOTOS SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK PHOTO, GETTY IMAGES
AS TOLD TO KAREN EVENNETT

NURSERY RHYME: TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR

From when my kids were in utero, until they were old enough to put themselves to bed with a book, I made a point of singing Twinkle, Twinkle every single day. It's a great tune for ear-training and I always attribute my children's ability to sing to their early exposure to my renditions of the rhyme. Imagine having that as your father. What a bore!

For details of the new tour, go to garethmalone.com.

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Woolly wonders

Cool cardies, chunky sweaters, on-trend tank tops and practical ponchos – keeping cosy never looked so good!

Spot cardigan
£68 6-18 *Oliver Bonas*

Bubble knit sweater **£30** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

Jacquard cardigan **£40** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

Roll-neck knitted jumper **£70** 6-18 *Oliver Bonas*

Keep knitwear looking good and bobble free with an electric fabric shaver.

Cardigan
£14 6-18 *Primark*

Fair Isle sweater
£42 10-24
Cotton Traders

FASHION EDITOR **JUSTINE BRENNAN**

Warm front

Fair Isle, Argyle, patterned or plain, the choice of winter woollies is vast, so take your pick...

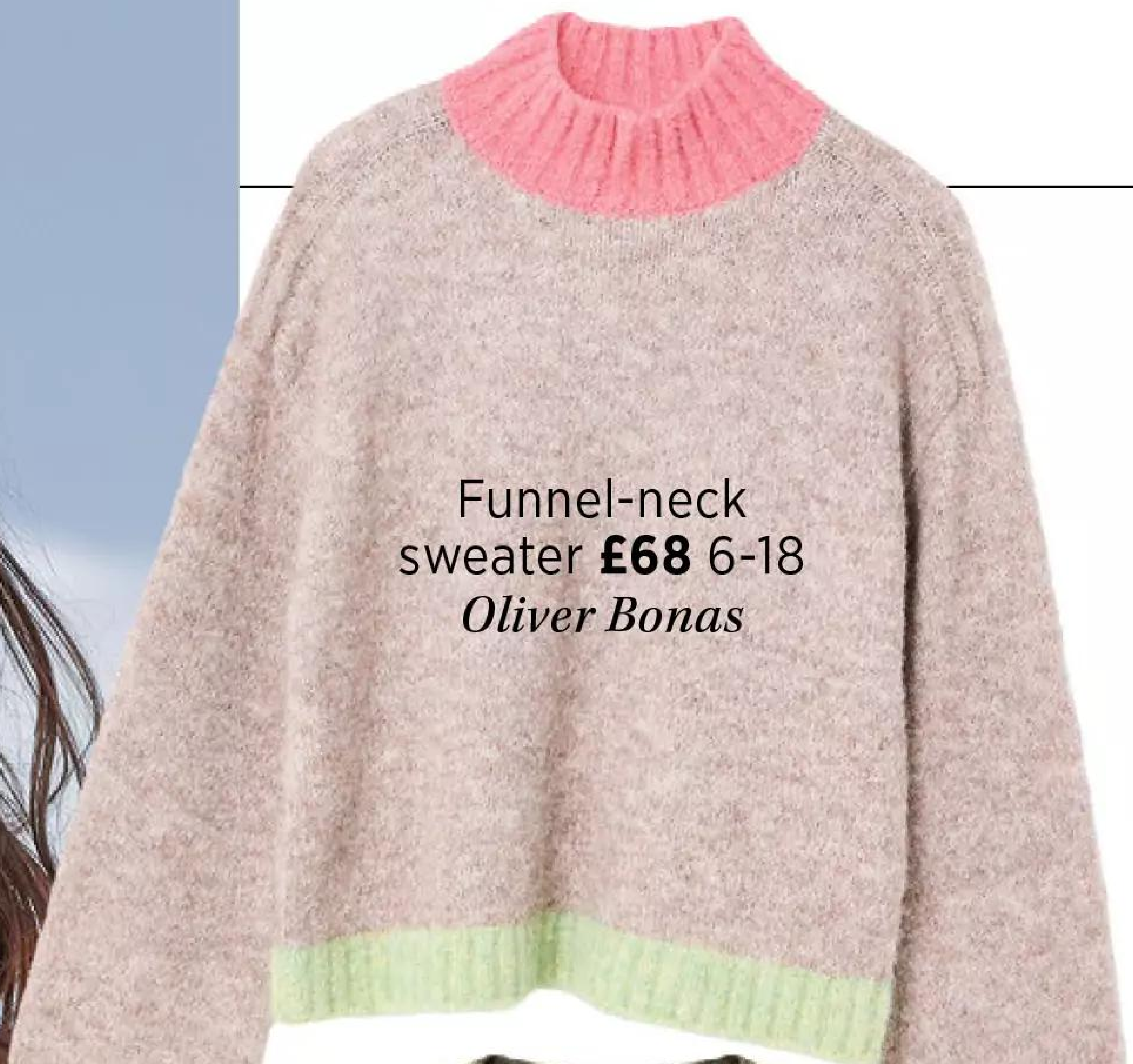
Pale blue sweater **£12.50** 8-22; checked scarf **£12.50**; jeans **£24** 8-22, all *Matalan*

Tank top **£45.99** xs-xl *Zara*

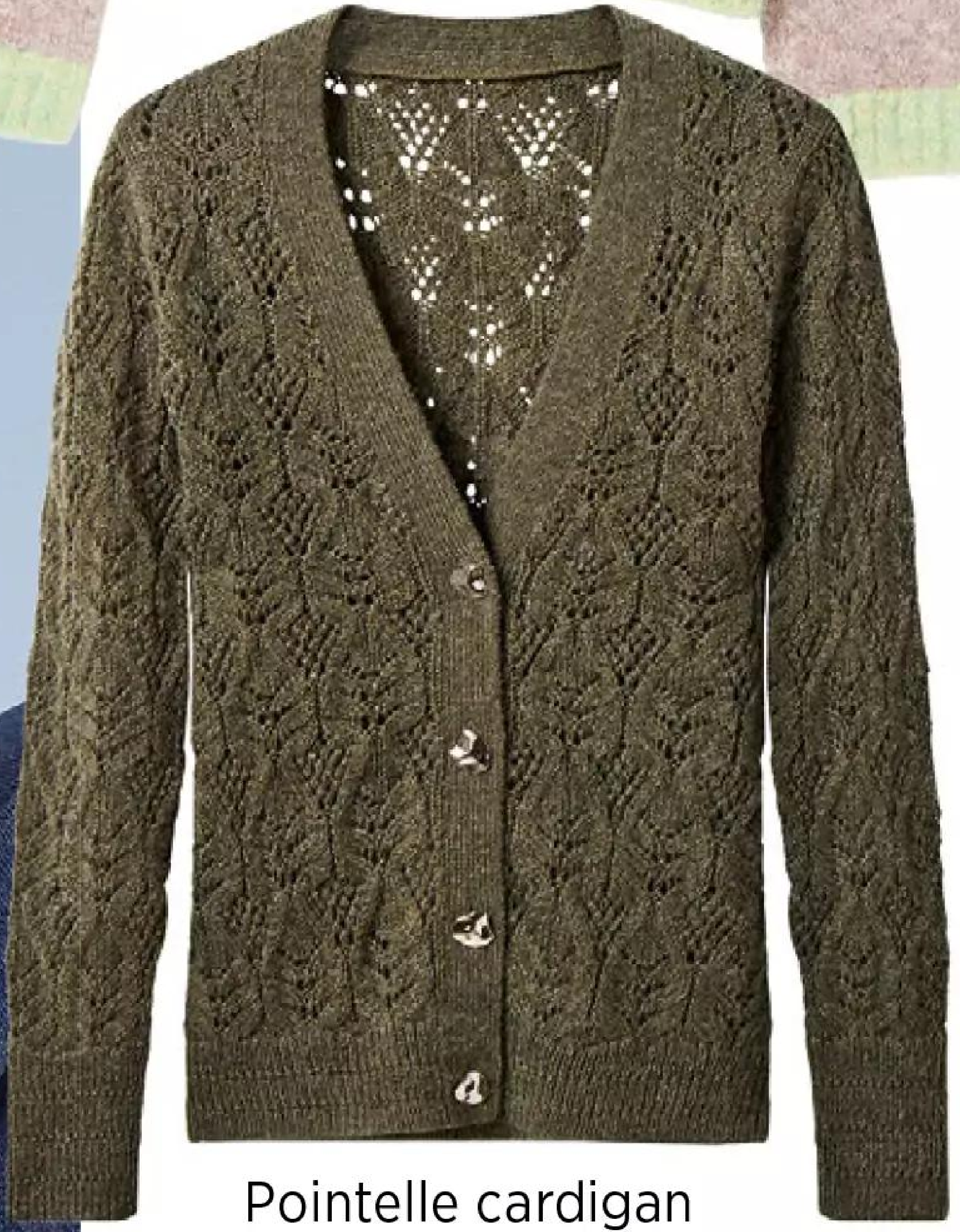
V-neck Fair Isle **£32** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

Embellished sweater **£69** s-xxl *Monsoon*

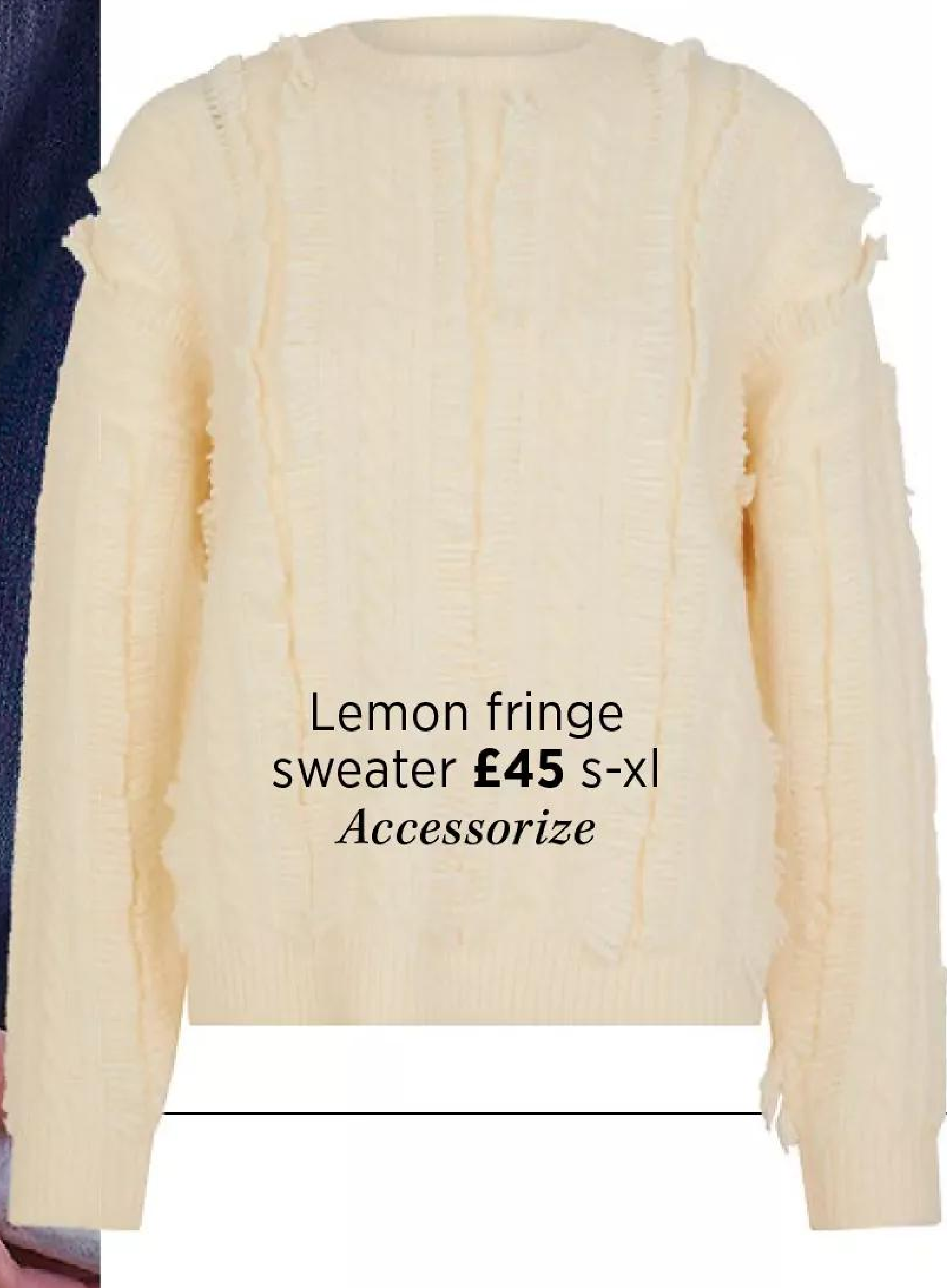
Lemon fine knit sweater **£11** 8-22: jeans **£24** 8-22; beanie hat **£5** all *Matalan*



Funnel-neck sweater **£68** 6-18 *Oliver Bonas*



Pointelle cardigan **£45** 8-18 *Joe Browns*



Lemon fringe sweater **£45** s-xl *Accessorize*

Fine threads

Layer fine knitwear over shirts, t-shirts or layer up on woollies for a fashion-focused look that's toasty too

Bow sweater **£25.99** xs-xl *Zara*

Cashmere crew neck sweater **£26** xs-xl *The Edit at Primark*

Heritage sweater **£45** 8-18 *Joe Browns*

Button-through tank top **£28** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

Cable knit vest top **£32** 10-24 *Cotton Traders*

Layer a sleeveless tank top over dresses to extend their wear from autumn into winter.

Sequined sweater **£69** s-xxl *Monsoon*

Crochet tank top **£49.99** xs-xl *Zara*

Knot your average knit

Far from boring, winter's cosiest clothes are both snug and stylish

Cable-knit fringe-trim poncho **£28** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

Organza-collared fluffy cardigan **£40** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

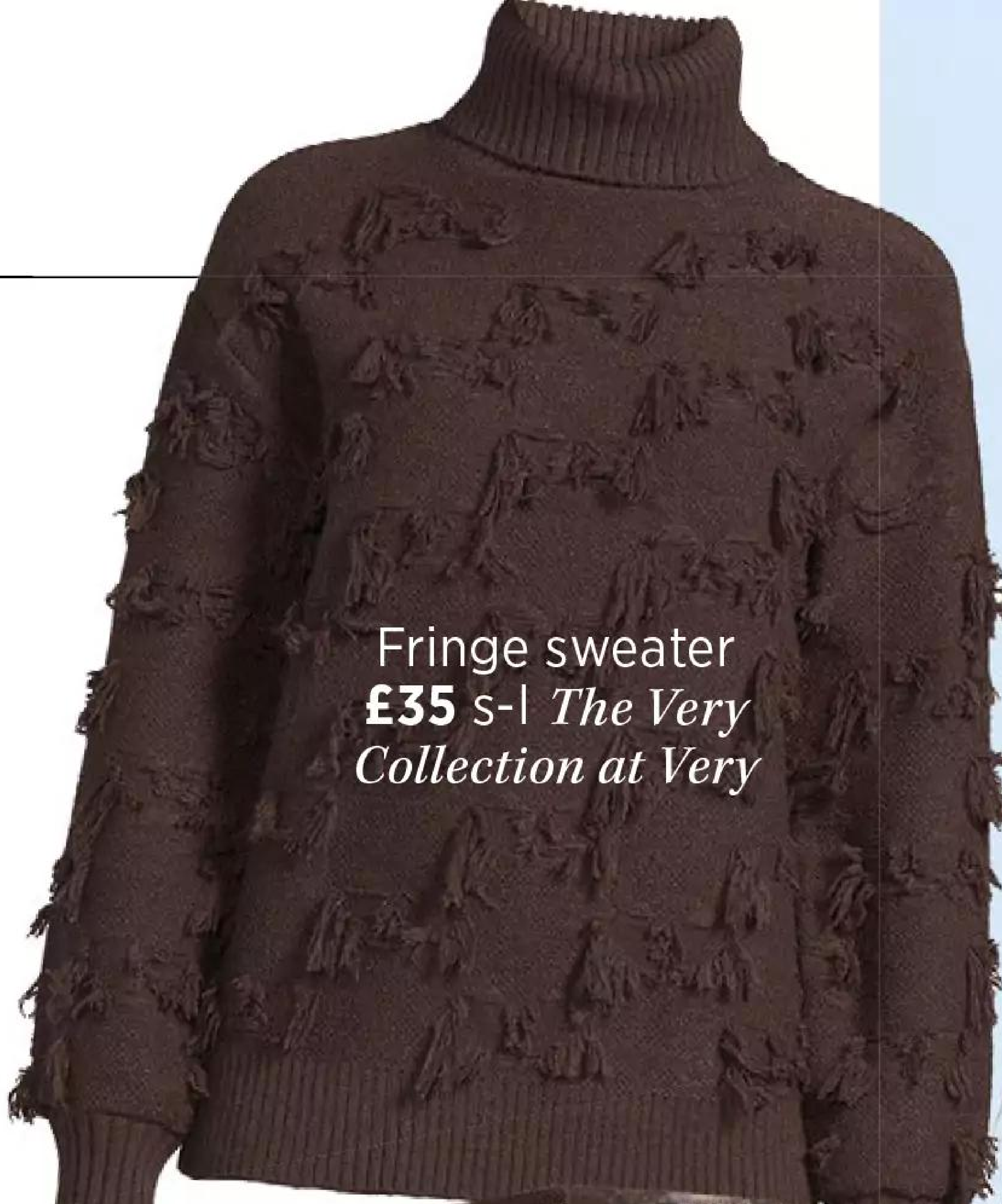
Fair Isle cardigan **£44** 18-24 *Cotton Traders*

Belt-tie cardigan **£40** s-l *The Very Collection at Very*

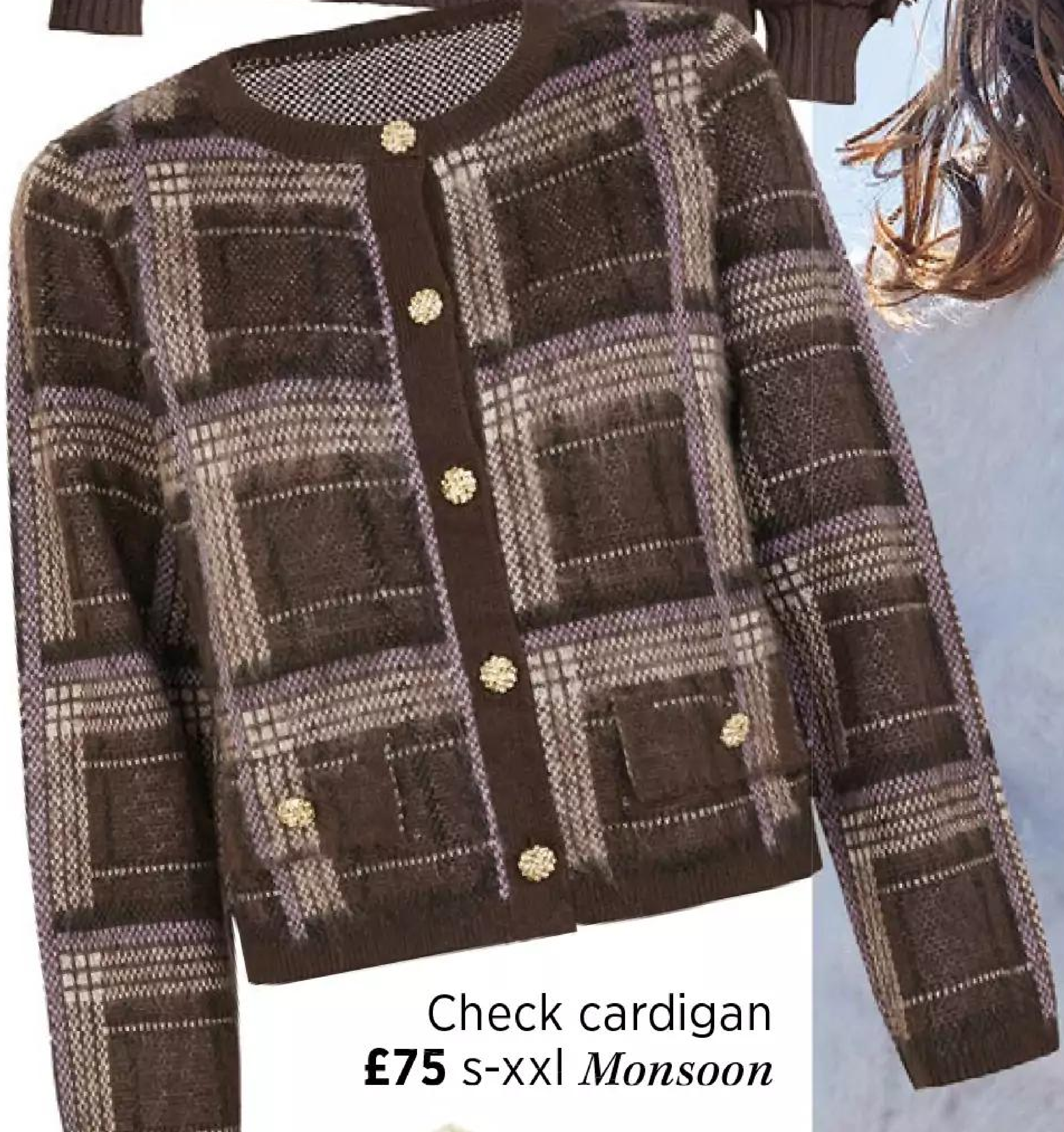
Stockinette-stitch cardigan **£85** s-xl *Busby & Fox*

A classic cardigan in a neutral colour using quality yarn is a staple that'll see you through every season.

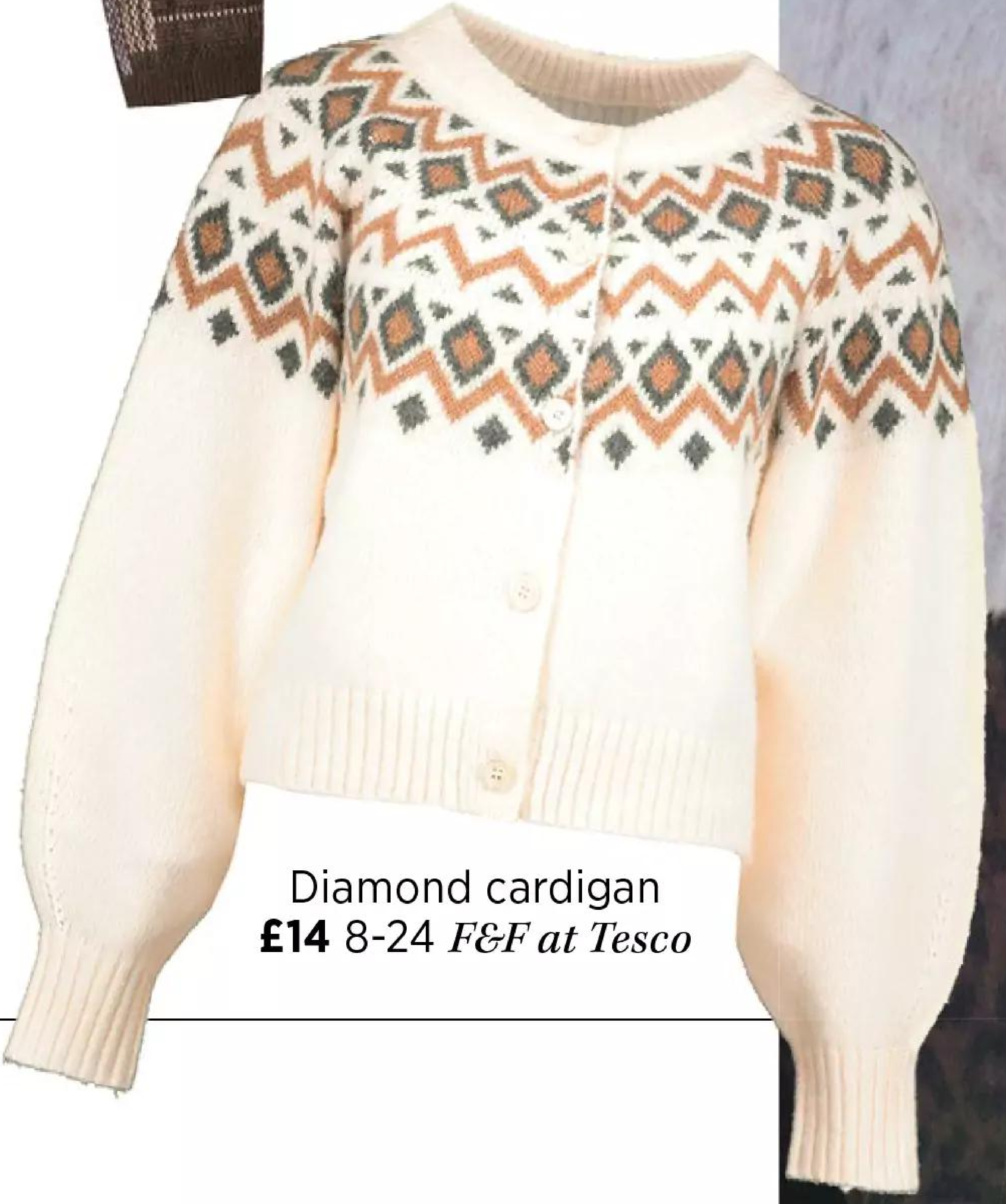
Boucle cardigan **£18** 8-24 *F&F at Tesco*



Fringe sweater
£35 s-l *The Very Collection at Very*



Check cardigan
£75 s-xxl *Monsoon*



Diamond cardigan
£14 8-24 *F&F at Tesco*

Chunky
cable-knit
sweater **£24**
xs-xxxl
Matalan

COMFY, COSY & CHIC

Our round up of the best fashion-focused finds for the chillier months ahead

WIN!

We've a bundle of goodies up for grabs from UK brand Totes Isotoner, which includes the charcoal hat and gloves set seen here, two additional sets of hats, gloves and scarves in grey and oat (see opposite), a grey faux fur hot water bottle and three pairs of their bestselling slippers, altogether worth £182. For a chance of winning, see p135.

Charcoal knitted hat and gloves set **£22** *Totes Toasties at Totes Isotoner*

Oatmeal hat, scarf and gloves set **£35** *Totes Toasties at Totes Isotoner*

Faux sheepskin bag **£19.99** *Deichmann*

Leather gloves **£45** *Oliver Bonas*

Leopard hat **£16** *Accessorize*

Scarf **£38** *Oliver Bonas*

Earmuffs **£12** *Accessorize*

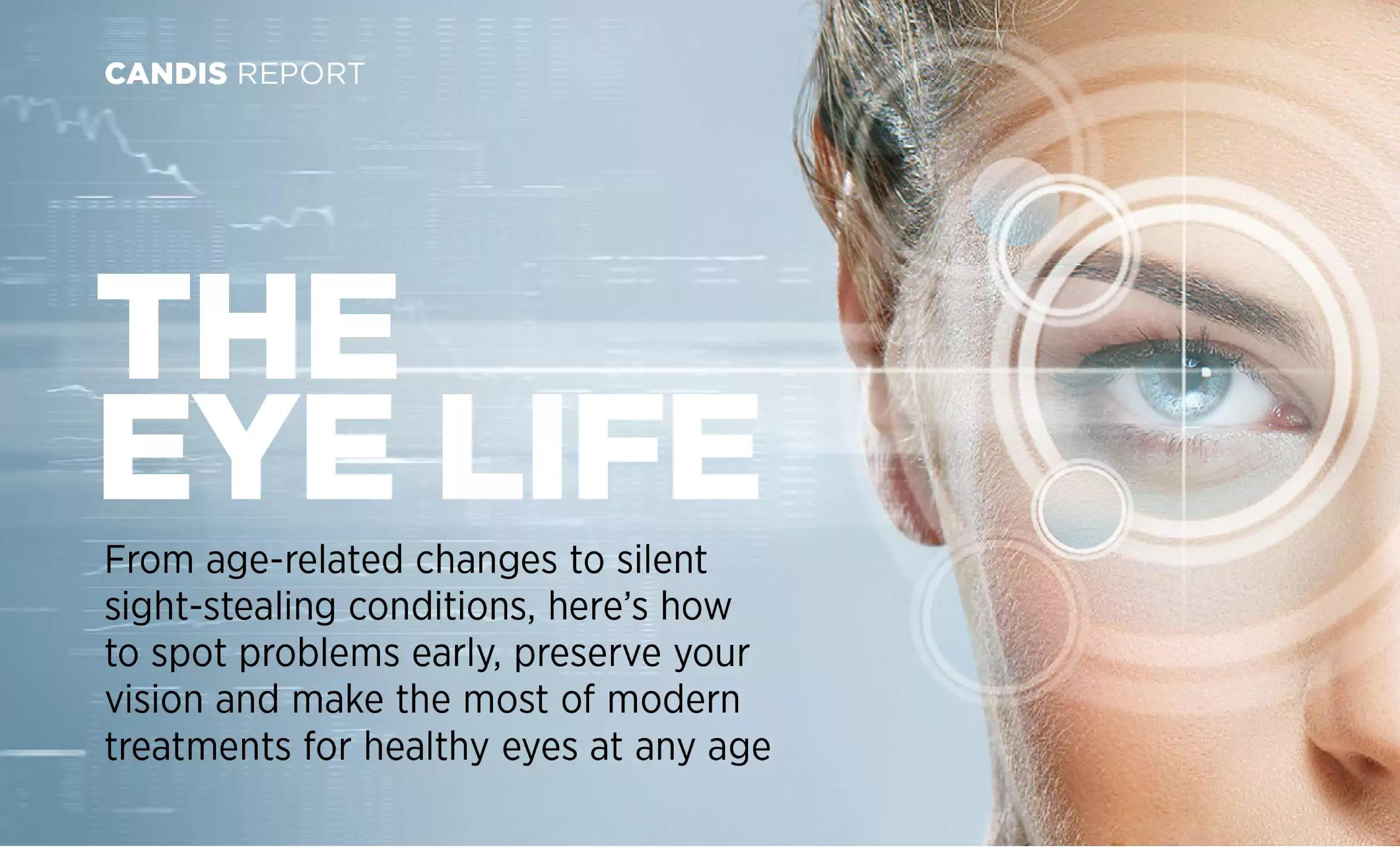
Borg-lined gloves **£25** *Accessorize*

Pom-pom hat **£19** *Monsoon*

Faux fur bag **£19.99** *Deichmann*

Cosy boots **£29.99** *Deichmann*

FASHION EDITOR **JUSTINE BRENNAN**



THE EYE LIFE

From age-related changes to silent sight-stealing conditions, here's how to spot problems early, preserve your vision and make the most of modern treatments for healthy eyes at any age

WORDS BY LEAH HARDY

Whether it's reading a book, walking, enjoying the smiles of our loved ones, or simply taking in the view, we depend on our eyesight for almost everything. Yet how often do we give our eyes the care they deserve? Experts say that to maintain healthy eyes and good vision as we age, regular maintenance is essential.

"Sudden changes in your vision should always be checked without delay," says Louise Gow, optometrist and the RNIB's Clinical Lead for Eye Health. "But it's also important to remember that many eye conditions have no symptoms in the early stages. At least 50 per cent of sight loss could be prevented if detected early."

Optometrist Zachary Smith from Midland Eye in Solihull agrees. "We often take our eyesight for granted until something goes wrong. But many conditions can be treated effectively if caught early. That's why regular eye exams are important."

SILENT CHANGES

As we age, our eyes naturally change. Some of these shifts are barely noticeable but, over time, they can begin to interfere with everyday life. While younger people with vision issues tend to be short-sighted, in your 40s or 50s, you might start to find it harder to read small print, especially in dim light. This is usually due to presbyopia, a condition where the lens inside the eye becomes less flexible, making it harder to focus on close objects. This is a normal occurrence that often happens with age. The first sign might be when you suddenly need to hold a menu at arm's length to read it.

To restore vision to the point where you no longer need glasses or contact lenses, you may opt for laser eye surgery. The procedure reshapes the cornea, the eye's clear front surface, to focus light rays correctly on the retina. To treat myopia (short-sightedness), the cornea is flattened. For hyperopia (long-sightedness), the cornea is made steeper and for astigmatism, which causes blurred vision at all distances, it is reshaped to correct uneven curvature.

By our 60s and beyond, more serious issues can quietly emerge. Cataracts can blur your vision, while age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects the retina and distorts central vision. Glaucoma, which results from pressure inside the eye damaging the optic nerve, can lead to irreversible sight loss.

"The worrying thing is many of these conditions develop quietly," warns Smith. "Vision loss from glaucoma, for example, can be advanced before people even realise something's wrong. Regular checks really do make all the difference."

Cataracts are the result of the lens thickening over time, becoming opaque and brownish in colour, like looking through foggy sunglasses. The good

WHY REGULAR EYE CHECKS MATTER

If your vision seems fine, is it really worth bothering with an eye test? Absolutely.

"Think of it as an MOT for your eyes," says optometrist Zachary Smith. Just by examining the tiny blood vessels at the back of your eye, tests can detect not only early-stage eye conditions, but also signs of diabetes, high blood pressure and even brain tumours.

The NHS recommends an eye test every two years. If you're over 40, have a family history of glaucoma, diabetes, or high blood pressure, you may need them more often.

Glaucoma is a serious condition that happens when fluid can't drain properly from the eye, increasing pressure and damaging the optic nerve. Symptoms of glaucoma can include blurred vision or seeing rainbow-coloured circles around bright lights. Both eyes are usually affected. However, the early stages are painless and invisible; vision loss starts at the edges, and the brain fills in the gaps.

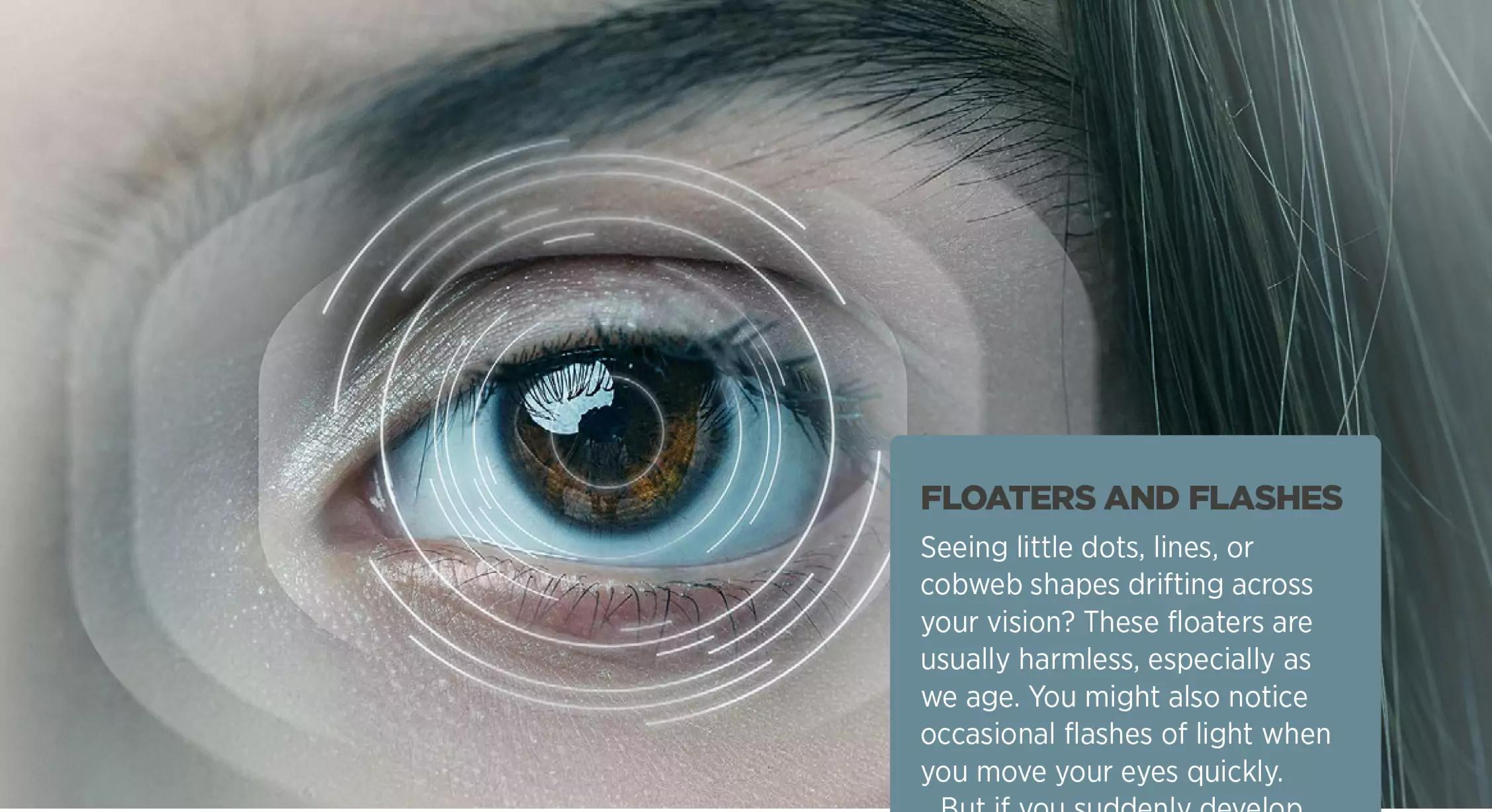
"But as glaucoma progresses, it can cause blindness," says Smith. "That's why early diagnosis is crucial. Treatments like drops, laser procedures or surgery are usually successful when started early."

news? Cataract surgery, typically performed under local anaesthetic, is quick, painless and very effective. The old lens is removed and replaced with a permanent, crystal-clear artificial lens. The day-case procedure can literally change your outlook. "After surgery, most people are amazed at how bright and colourful the world appears again," says Smith. "When one eye is done, people may perceive a wall as white through the treated eye, and a murky cream through the other." Private clinics offer intraocular lenses that correct both near and distance vision. However, on the NHS, you'll typically have to choose to correct one or the other.

AMD, meanwhile, occurs when waste products build up under the retina and aren't cleared as effectively with age. "Smoking and UV exposure are big risk factors," adds Smith. "A healthy diet rich in fruit, leafy greens and omega-3s from oily fish can help prevent the condition or slow its progress."

In advanced cases, AMD can develop into Wet AMD, where fluid leaks under the retina, distorting vision. Straight lines, such as door frames, may appear wavy. Treatment involves injections to prevent further damage. "It may sound scary," says Smith, "but the injections are painless and over in seconds."

> **"AFTER SURGERY, MOST PEOPLE ARE AMAZED AT HOW BRIGHT AND COLOURFUL THE WORLD APPEARS AGAIN"**



ONES TO WATCH

Many people experience dry, itchy or gritty eyes, but it can be more than just a nuisance. "Tears aren't just water; they're a mix of oil, water, and mucus," explains Bhavin Shah, optometrist at Central Vision Opticians. "When that balance is off, tears evaporate too quickly, and eyes can feel sore, blurry or irritated."

Dry eye syndrome is prevalent after menopause and can be triggered by screen use, air conditioning, medications or underlying conditions. Symptoms include burning, stinging, blurred vision, and even excessive watering as your eyes try to compensate.

"Mild cases often improve with small changes – stay hydrated, take screen breaks, avoid direct airflow and use preservative-free eye drops," says Shah. "But for more persistent cases, advanced treatments like intense pulsed light therapy can help unblock oil glands."

We all know smoking damages our lungs and heart, but it's also one of the

FLOATERS AND FLASHES

Seeing little dots, lines, or cobweb shapes drifting across your vision? These floaters are usually harmless, especially as we age. You might also notice occasional flashes of light when you move your eyes quickly.

But if you suddenly develop new floaters, see new flashing lights, or notice a curtain-like shadow across your vision, it's time to act fast. These symptoms may indicate a retinal tear or detachment, a sight-threatening condition that requires urgent treatment.

A retinal tear is a break in the thin, light-sensitive retina at the back of the eye, often caused by the shrinking and pulling of the gel-like vitreous inside the eye as we age. Left untreated, it can lead to a complete detachment, which can cause blindness.

Sarah, 62, sought help after noticing what looked to her like a grey curtain across her vision. Her optometrist diagnosed a retinal tear and referred her to hospital where she had laser treatment that same day. "I was terrified beforehand, but I didn't feel a thing, just saw some flashing lights. I was home that afternoon and walking the dog the next day. I'm so grateful they acted so fast."

leading causes of sight loss. It doubles your risk of AMD and speeds up cataract formation. Toxins in smoke damage delicate tissues and reduce blood flow to the retina. Even passive smoking can worsen dry eye symptoms. "The best thing to do for eyes, and your whole body, is to stop smoking," says Smith.

When our sight suffers, our emotional well-being often does too. In 2020, a US study found that one in four adults with vision loss experienced anxiety or depression. Even treating seemingly simple issues can have a significant emotional impact. "Surgery often lets people drive again, which restores their independence, their ability to help loved ones, and their confidence," says Smith.

One study showed that cataract surgery reduced depression risk by 25 per cent. Other research links it to fewer falls and better brain function. "It's hard to overstate the importance of caring for our vision," Smith adds. "It's fundamental to our health, happiness, and ability to enjoy life."

Go to candis.co.uk/healthy eyes for your essential eye health checklist

"MY EYE TEST SAVED MY LIFE"

When Barbara Onions, 60, from the West Midlands, began experiencing blackouts and vision changes in 2024, she attributed them to tiredness. "I'd been signed off work with stress, but my symptoms didn't improve," Barbara recalls. "Friends noticed changes in my personality and mobility so in February 2025 I had an eye test."

At Specsavers Aldridge, ophthalmic director Tajinder Showker performed an advanced optical coherence tomography (OCT) scan, which utilises light to capture over 1,000 images of the back of the eye. This layered view helps detect issues beyond a standard test – and in Barbara's case, revealed swelling on her optic nerve. An urgent hospital referral uncovered a 7cm benign brain tumour, which has since been removed. "It was a shock, but I'm thankful Tajinder acted quickly. If he hadn't, I might not be here today," Barbara says.

Tajinder adds, "Eye tests aren't just about vision – advanced scans can detect serious conditions. Don't delay if something doesn't feel right."

Visit specsavers.co.uk

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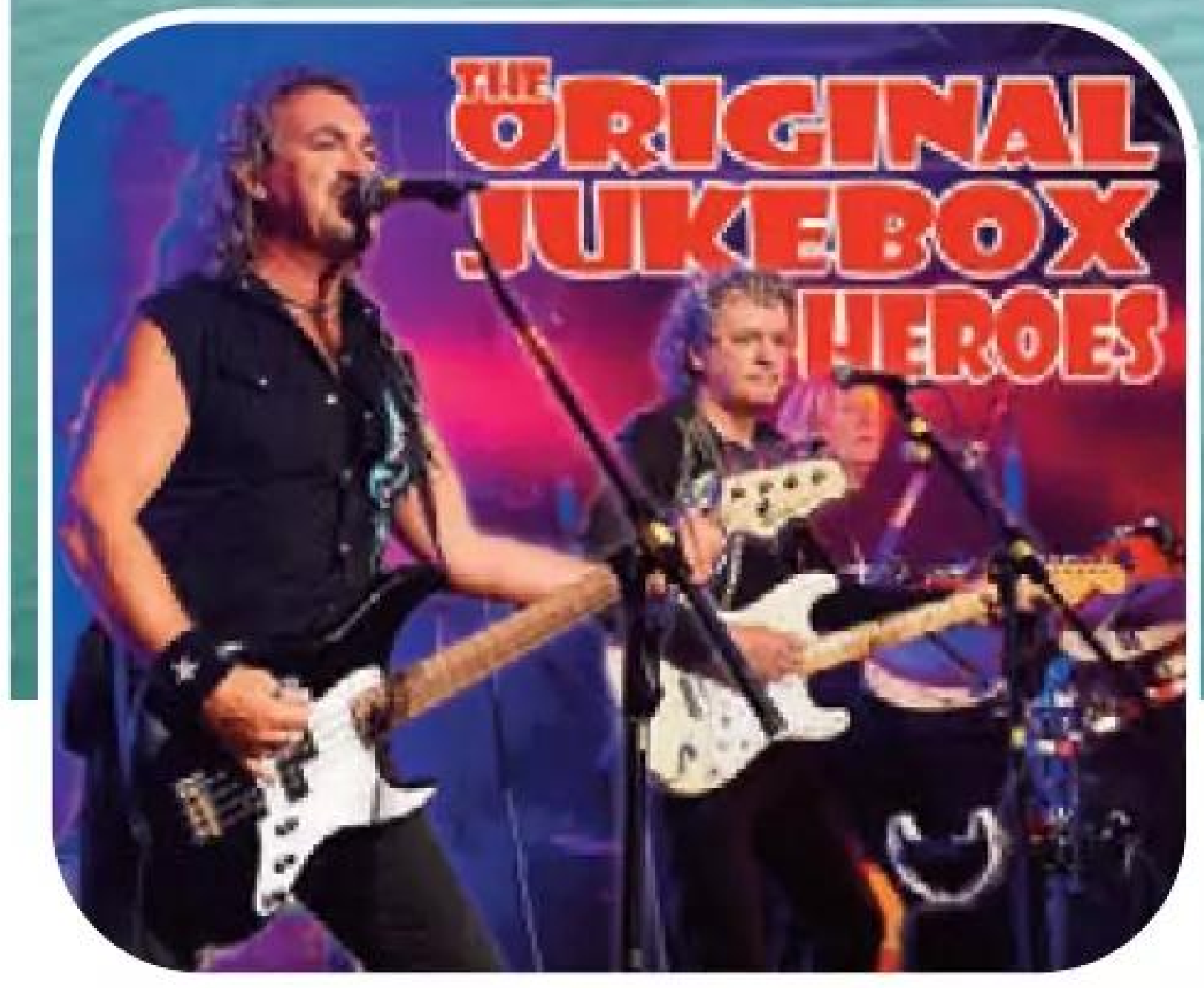

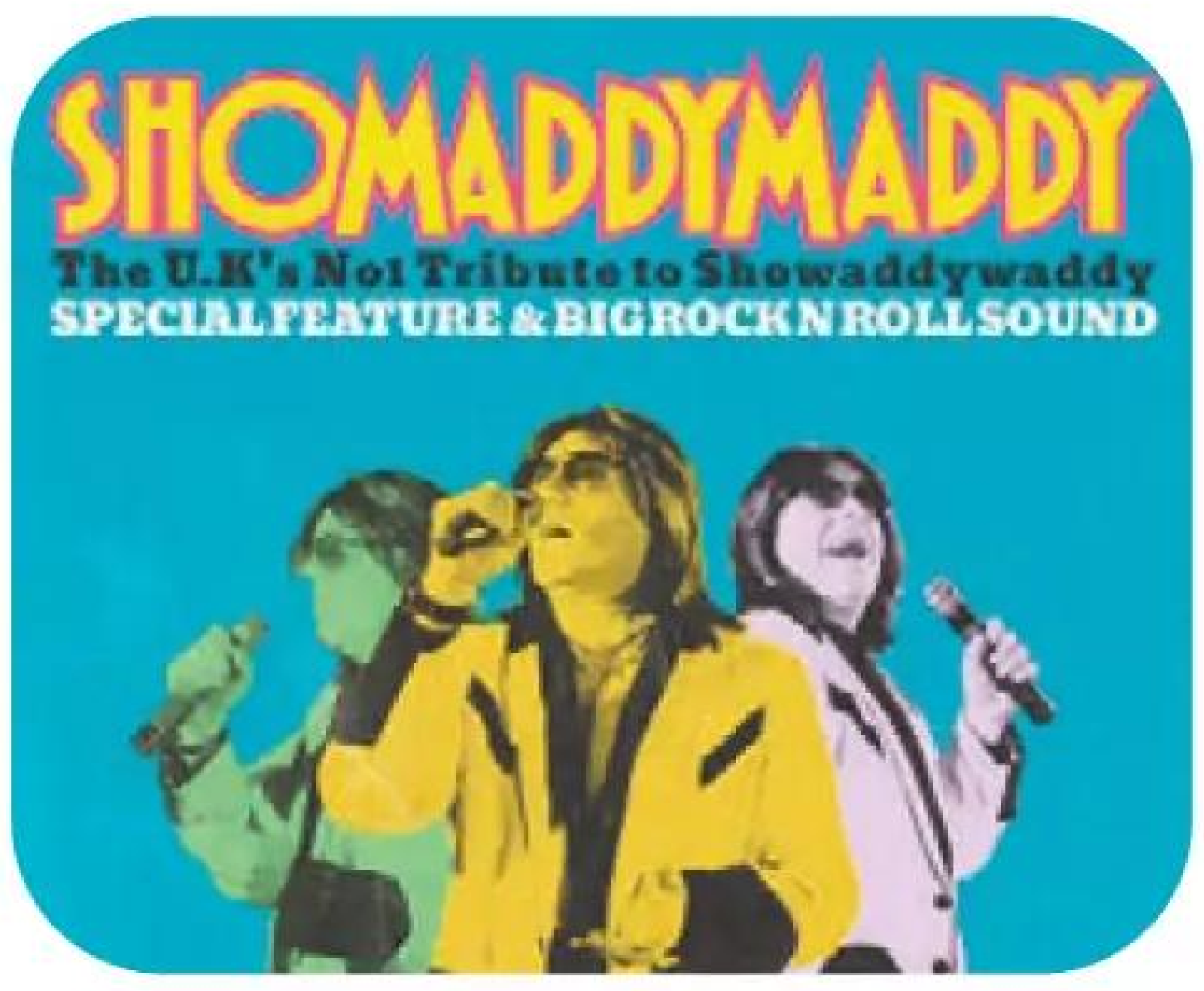
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GOLD
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2024

HEALTH NEWS

Our Health Expert **Leah Hardy** has a wealth of savvy tips and advice on staying fit and well in the months ahead

Forgetful… or something more?

Memory slips happen to everyone – but when should you worry? Here's how to tell the everyday from the important

You head upstairs with purpose, only to stand in your bedroom wondering why you are there. You call your partner by the dog's name, or circle the car park convinced you parked on level three – or was it two? Sound familiar?

The good news, says Emma Taylor, Information Services Manager at Alzheimer's Research UK, is that most lapses are normal, not signs of dementia. "As we age, memory and thinking naturally slow," she explains. What's more, the longer we live, the more experiences we have, and the more we have to remember. Our mental filing cabinet – the brain – can be become overloaded. That's one of the reasons that forgetting is a healthy and useful process. It helps us let go of bad experiences, clears out unimportant mental 'clutter' and makes space for new information.

Take the 'doorway effect' – walking into a room and forgetting why you went in. This not related to age but is a normal part of how the brain resets your memory when you enter new space or situation. A 2021 University College London study found multitasking worsens it. The trick? Remind yourself of your purpose as you move – a technique called 'rehearsal' that helps fix memories short-term.

'Tip-of-the-tongue' moments and name mix-ups are also common. Professor

Samantha Deffler of Duke University in the US found these mistakes usually occur within categories – family, friends, colleagues. So, calling your husband Fido just means the dog counts as family.

Hormonal changes, especially around menopause, can affect memory, as can hot flushes, poor sleep and low mood. Some medications – including certain antihistamines, antidepressants and painkillers – also play a role. Vitamin B12 deficiency, thyroid issues, dehydration, stress and anxiety may contribute too.

Taylor stresses one key point: “The most important thing about memory loss is knowing when it’s worth speaking to your GP.” You can’t diagnose yourself – but you can notice what’s normal for you or a loved one and seek help if something feels off.

WHEN TO SEE YOUR GP

These signs are worth investigating:

- Misplacing things in odd places, like putting keys in the fridge
- Substituting incorrect words without realising
- Worsening memory loss over several months
- Struggling with everyday tasks
- Confusion in familiar places, such as getting lost in your own street
- Consistently forgetting the names of people you know well, or struggling to recognise familiar faces
- Forgetting or repeating recent conversations
- Alterations in mood, behaviour or personality

For more information go to alzheimersresearchuk.org or call 0300 111 5111. To find out more about support for carers, turn to page 36.

The truth about WOMEN'S HAIR LOSS

It is not just men who lose their hair. By 50, almost half of women notice thinning, but most causes are treatable

When hair loss is discussed, men tend to get the spotlight. Yet thinning hair is a reality for millions of women, too. But while men usually develop a shiny bald patch, or find their hair recedes from the temples, female hair loss tends to happen from all over the head, so your parting may become wider or ponytail feel thinner, or in advanced cases, your scalp may become visible under your hair. Hair loss may seem trivial but can be very distressing. The good news is that there are treatments that can help.

WHY DO WOMEN LOSE HAIR?

"There are many causes of hair loss," says Anabel Kingsley, trichologist at Philip Kingsley. "They include anything from hormonal changes and genetics through to nutritional deficiencies, stress and scalp health issues."

The most common culprit is female pattern hair loss, or androgenetic alopecia. Follicles start to shrink, produce finer hairs over time, and can even become dormant. According to Kingsley, perimenopause is a key trigger. "Oestrogen supports the scalp and helps to keep strands in their growth phase," she says. This is why it often starts in the 40s or 50s, but can appear earlier, in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome.

Treatments include topical minoxidil, a drug that pushes dormant hair into its growth phase; prescription anti-androgens for hormonal loss; and low-level laser devices. Cosmetic measures such as wigs, hairpieces and fibre sprays provide instant confidence and can be used alongside or instead of other treatments.

Another frequent cause is telogen effluvium, shedding that follows physical stress. "Illnesses that cause a high fever, including Covid-19, surgery, weight loss or childbirth, can push hair follicles into a resting phase," explains Professor Andrew Messenger, dermatologist and member of Alopecia UK's Research Committee.

Postpartum hair loss affects at least half of new mothers. Says Kingsley, "The body views hair as dispensable. So, when anything isn't right internally, our body de-prioritises hair cell production."

Messenger says, "Hair typically begins to fall

out two to three months after the trigger and can take a year to recover."

Deficiencies in iron and vitamin D, thyroid disease and weight loss – intentional or unintentional – can also stress the body and lead to hair loss.

ALOPECIA AREATA

Some women experience sudden bald patches. This autoimmune condition causes the body to attack its own follicles. Steroid injections may help, but the latest and most effective treatments are prescription tablets called JAK inhibitors that reduce inflammation around hair follicles and encourage regrowth. Patience is essential. Hair grows only about a centimetre a month. But Professor Messenger is reassuring. "With time, most women see their hair return," he says.

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Supplement know-how

PROBIOTICS AND PREBIOTICS

Your digestive system is host to around 100 trillion living organisms, such as bacteria and yeasts

Research suggests this ‘microbiome’ – which is as individual as your fingerprint – plays a vital role in our digestion, immunity, risk of disease and even our mood. Probiotics are supplements of some of these live organisms that aim to improve, restore or maintain healthy gut flora. Prebiotics, on the other hand, are non-digestible fibres that feed our beneficial gut bacteria and encourage healthy diversity.

So, should you be taking a supplement? Nutrition expert Professor Tim Spector says, “The science is evolving rapidly, and some supplements can be worthwhile. For example, *Saccharomyces boulardii* is a probiotic yeast strain used to treat diarrhoea. It’s very effective.” Yet, he also emphasises that in his own tests, prebiotics were ten times more effective than probiotics in improving the balance of good and bad gut bacteria. And some studies have shown that taking probiotics after antibiotics may even slow the recovery of our own natural microbiome.

Eating a varied diet including naturally probiotic-rich, fermented foods like yoghurt, cheese, kefir and sauerkraut, along with a varied diet containing fibre-rich fruit, nuts and vegetables, remains the most effective strategy for keeping your gut healthy and happy.

ASK THE EXPERT

Should I worry about age spots?

I’ve noticed brown age spots appearing on my face, chest and hands. Why do I have them, and how can I get rid of them?

Dr Mark Hudson-Peacock, Consultant Dermatologist at stratumclinics.com, explains: “These brown patches contain more melanocytes, the cells that produce melanin, which darkens the skin. The commonest type, solar lentigos, are caused by sun exposure.

“Solar lentigos are harmless, but any spots with irregular borders or multiple colours, or which are growing or spreading should always be checked out by a dermatologist

“Options to reduce the appearance of sun spots include laser or IPL treatments that absorb brown pigment. Incorporating antioxidants such as a vitamin C serum in the morning under your sunscreen, plus retinoids in the evening can also help.

“To prevent new spots simply protect yourself from the sun.”

PHOTOS ISTOCK, ADOBE STOCK

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CONSUMER KNOW-HOW

Consumer editor **Scott Dixon** has top tips for avoiding costly mistakes when sending Christmas parcels and shopping online

Christmas may be the most wonderful time of the year, but if you shop online, it can be a nightmare. From parcels on random doorsteps to blurry proof-of-delivery photos that show nothing useful, it's no wonder missing deliveries are one of the biggest gripes for shoppers.

And if you're sending or receiving gifts from abroad, there's another layer of headaches – customs declarations, surprise customs fees and rules about what can and can't be delivered.

From buying online to checking customs paperwork, and your rights if parcels go missing, here's my guide to ensure shopping goes without a hitch.

YOUR RIGHTS WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Stick with retailers you know and trust, and check reviews, delivery timeframes and returns policies. Many wrongly believe you should contact the courier when a parcel goes missing. Your contract is always with the retailer – not the courier. Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, it's the retailer's responsibility to ensure goods arrive safely, without delay and within 30 days of placing the order. Section 29 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 states that goods remain at the trader's risk until they come into the physical possession of the consumer or a person identified by the consumer to take possession. So, if a parcel is dumped outside and stolen or left with neighbours without consent, the retailer is liable. If you specify a 'safe place' and your parcel is stolen, you are liable, as the firm and courier have followed instructions.

If you order something and it arrives broken, damaged or doesn't arrive at all, the retailer is responsible to resolve it – not the courier. Courier drivers are usually self-employed and only get paid for each parcel delivered.

As many of us have experienced, this can lead to packages being thrown over walls, left in bins or outside in the pouring rain. If the parcel is

damaged or doesn't arrive, it is the seller's responsibility to sort it and not the courier. You are legally entitled to a replacement or refund.

Evidence is key. Take photos of any damaged goods and packaging and keep proof of time, dates, delivery emails and footage from video doorbells or CCTV.

If they refuse to refund or replace your item, tell them you will make a chargeback with your bank or credit card provider for a 'breach of contract' under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 to reverse and dispute the transaction. If you paid more than £100 by credit card, Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 holds the card provider jointly liable. Chargebacks are costly and problematic for retailers to deal with, so even the threat of it will often elicit the right outcome.

CHECK CUSTOMS CHARGES

Sending and receiving gifts is a lovely surprise. But if you don't follow the rules, your parcel could be delayed, returned or leave your loved one with a fee to pay.

Always complete a customs declaration – even for low-value items. Clearly label the parcel as a gift and state the contents

SENDING A PARCEL?

When you send a parcel, your contract is with the courier firm, so it is their responsibility to make sure it arrives safely. Under Section 49 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015, all services, including deliveries, must be carried out with reasonable care and skill. So, if your parcel goes missing, or the courier has not followed delivery instructions, it's up to the courier firm to sort it out.

Ask for a certificate of posting if the parcel is sent at the Post Office, or a confirmation email or receipt from the courier firm. This is crucial evidence if the parcel goes missing.

Also, take a photo of the parcel at the point of handover as additional proof. If you simply put the item in a post box and it's lost in the post, you won't usually have proof of posting – this means you can't get compensation.

If you are claiming for damage or loss, you will need to report a claim as soon as possible as courier firms have specific timeframes for claims. You will need to provide a description of the packaging and condition of the item, so take photos if you can. If your gift was valuable, you will need to provide proof of value such a receipt, bank statements or repair quotations.

Consider taking out insurance if you are sending anything valuable. If you have insurance, you will be able to recoup your losses, but if you don't, you may face an uphill struggle.

and value. You can pick up customs forms at the Post Office or complete them online.

KNOW THE LIMITS

In the EU, gifts under €45 (£39) are usually exempt from VAT and customs charges. If your gift exceeds the limits, the recipient may have to pay import taxes.

Royal Mail has a handy guide on how to send parcels internationally. See help.royalmail.com/personal/s/article/How-to-send-internationally

CHECK RESTRICTED ITEMS

Each country has its own rules on prohibited or restricted items, and Royal Mail does too. Some countries have quirky bans. Did you know that haggis was banned by the US authorities in 1971 because it contains sheep's lungs and was ruled unfit for human consumption? Macsween of Edinburgh has created a new recipe to circumvent the rules. It's best to check official Government websites for up-to-date information.

INCLUDE A RETURN ADDRESS

If customs reject your parcel or mark it 'return to sender,' you want it returned and not disappear.

Consider insurance for anything valuable or sentimental, but always read the small print carefully. Insurance firms often rely on sneaky exclusions to decline claims and hope you will accept it without question. If that happens to you, push back and ask them to direct you to the specific paragraph they are relying on. Key Terms and exclusions must be clear, fair and not misleading – they cannot be buried in the small print.

If the insurer still refuses, ask for a 'final response' or 'deadlock letter'. This allows you to escalate your complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service, which is free and impartial, and can instruct them to pay up if they have treated you unfairly.

CHECK POSTAGE COSTS

It's worth checking how much it will cost to send an item in advance. It often costs more to post something than it's worth, so look at websites in that country to see if you can order a gift online instead.

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

A little planning goes a long way. Check delivery cut-off dates, double-check any customs forms and requirements and keep your evidence safe.

I hope you have a wonderful and peaceful Christmas, and I'll be back in the New Year to help with more of your consumer conundrums!

Go to candis.co.uk/consumer for more information and useful links. You can ask Scott a question by emailing scott@candis.co.uk

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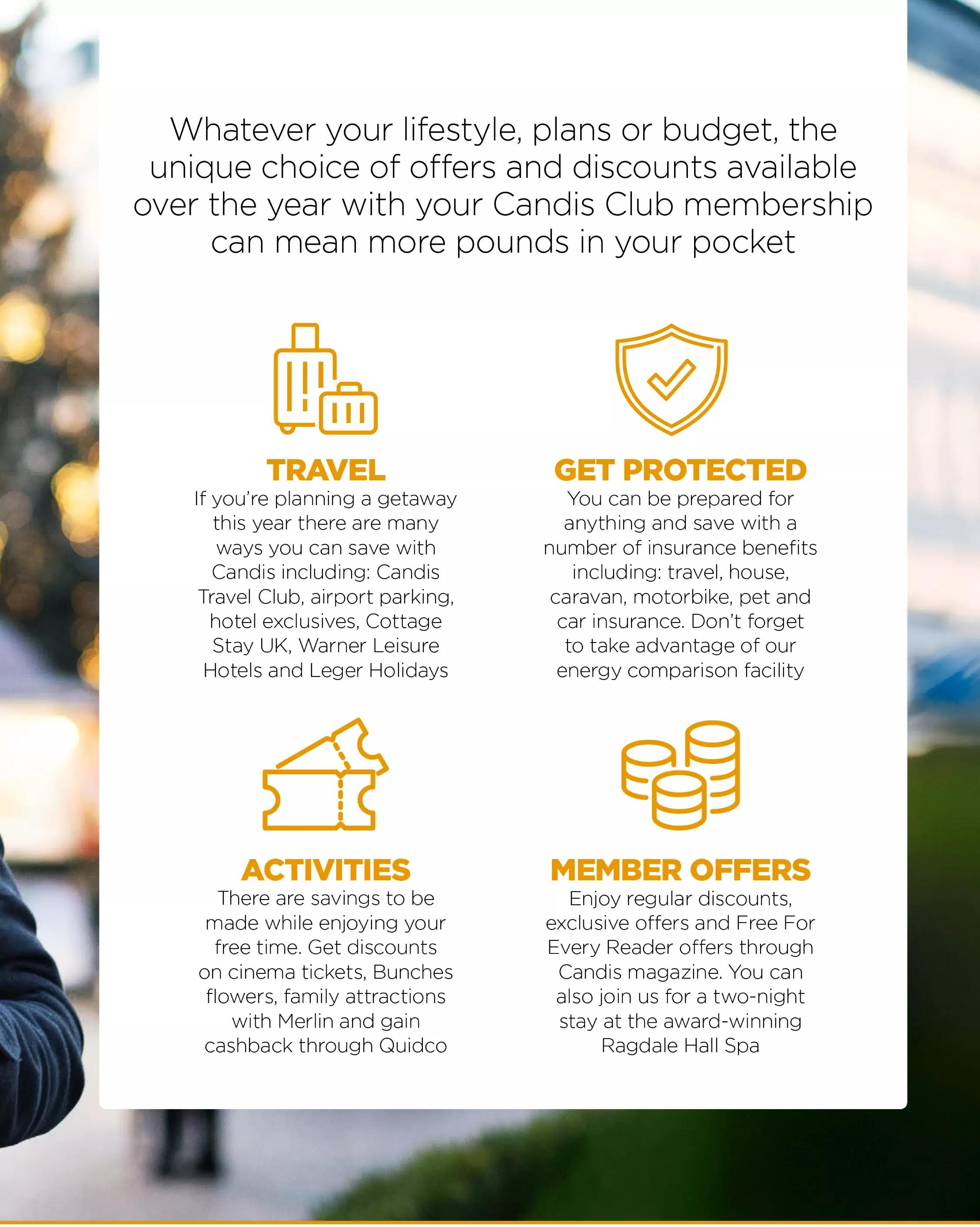

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BOUQUET OF BARBED WIRE

Based on a father's unnatural obsession with his daughter, the discomforting storyline shocked viewers in 1976...

Adapted from the novel of the same name by Andrea Newman, the seven-part series was broadcast on ITV with 20 million viewers!

Aired after the watershed on a Friday night, the programme was unlike anything else viewers had seen on mainstream TV and they were captivated by the dark themes and undercurrents that unfolded in this racy, domestic drama. Renowned actor Frank Finlay played Peter Manson, a wealthy middle-class publisher, married to Cassie (Sheila Allen), a family counsellor. The plot centred around the couple's spoiled daughter, Prue (Susan Penhaligon), who exploits her father's unhealthy interest in her for her own twisted amusement.

When Prue has a relationship with Gavin (James Aubrey) an American actor, she quickly becomes pregnant and they tie the knot. It's inferred that Prue's engineered this sequence of events to provoke and manipulate her father, and tensions arise between Peter and Gavin. Cassie senses that Prue is enjoying playing the two men against each other. Her experience as a counsellor tells her that something is very wrong with the father-daughter dynamic. She books a holiday for herself and Peter, and their two younger sons but Peter ruins it by being spiteful towards her believing that she is in cohoots with Prue who's shunned him after his ill treatment of Gavin. Incensed by Prue's marriage and pregnancy, he reacts by having an affair with his secretary, Sarah. When Cassie airs her suspicions, Peter admits the affair and his incestuous obsession with Prue and she tells him to leave.

The drama escalates when an emotional Cassie has sex with Gavin! More shocks are delivered when he in turn badly beats a pregnant Prue and she's hospitalised.

Gavin later tells Cassie that Prue provokes him into hurting her as a means of warped self-punishment. When Prue gives birth to a baby girl, her parents reunite to visit her. But there are no happy endings here – Prue dies suddenly, leaving her family (and viewers) in tatters.

PHOTOS SHUTTERSTOCK

THE SEQUEL

Following the phenomenal success of the first series, London Weekend Television commissioned Andrea Newman to write *Another Bouquet*, which aired in 1977. Storylines followed the dysfunctional family who are struggling in the aftermath of Prue's death.

Peter is now in a formal relationship with Sarah, and Cassie finds love again but battles with her desire for Gavin, her son-in-law. As the story unfolds, it's clear that that lessons from the past hadn't been learned. The characters became deeply tangled in a web of toxic lies and deceit of their own making. Depicting adultery, domestic abuse and a questionable father-daughter relationship, these themes with raw emotional acting were taboo-breaking for British TV at the time.

THE REMAKE (2010)

The three-part series starred Trevor Eve and Hermione Norris as Peter and Cassie Manson, Tom Riley as Gavin and Imogen Poots as Prue. In this adaptation by Guy Andrews, Gavin was a teacher and Prue a sixth form student. More than five million viewers tuned in, compelled by the openly flaunted antics of a seemingly prim middle-class family who were anything but!

COOKING WITH CATHERINE

Candis
KITCHEN
with Catherine Hill
candis.co.uk/food

This month, our food editor, **Catherine Hill**, shares her insider know-how on stir-fries and cold smoking as well as bringing you some great tips and amazing new supermarket buys

Our seasonal dishes this month embrace the best the UK has to offer right now. Our wonderfully rich chowder needs just a few simple store cupboard ingredients, but it's the smoked haddock that really bolsters this soup with its smoky warm flavour and meaty texture. Haddock is a fish that's endlessly versatile and always promises to pack a flavourful punch to whatever its teamed with. I love it simply roasted and served with an egg and softly wilted spinach for a late brekkie, or flaked into spiced rice for a really easy supper.

Puy lentils, while available all year round, become a go-to ingredient for me in the colder months, plus they're a great alternative to minced meat. Nutty and with a lovely firm bite, try adding herbs, garlic, celery and carrot to the cooking water to give them even more flavour. The puy lentil sauce used in our moussaka is guaranteed to become a family favourite, as it's perfect over baked spuds or stirred through hot pasta.

Finally, our rich Chinese pork recipe proves that stir-fries aren't just for the summer months – adapt the veggies that we've used to create your own take on the dish, but be sure to finish with a good drizzle of hot honey. It's our new favourite homemade condiment!

STIR-FRY KNOW-HOW

Although stir-frying is a simple cooking method, here are a few tips to elevate it from mediocre to marvellous.

First, have all your ingredients chopped and ready to go. Cut veggies into equal-sized pieces to ensure even cooking. Don't feel like you have to use a vast array in one dish – keep it simple and let the ingredients shine.

Always use an oil with a high smoke point – I always go for rapeseed, as it has a neutral flavour.

Most traditional woks are made from very thin steel, which heats up to a fierce heat quickly, but as it doesn't retain heat well it cools down quickly too, so always keep the wok touching the flame. Heat it until searing hot before adding a tablespoon of oil, swirl it all around the pan and up the sides to create a non-stick surface.

Whether it's chicken, pork, seafood or tofu, always cook the protein element first. Don't overcrowd the pan to ensure the food is in contact with the wok's surface, creating caramelisation and preventing food sweating.

Now add the aromatics – this is usually spring onions, garlic, ginger and chilli. Just a minute or so should bring all the aromas and flavours to life.

Next, add your veg, starting with the one that takes the longest to cook. You could always pre-steam anything that's particularly tough before stir-frying.

Finally, add your sauce or soy sauce to the wok, drizzling it down the sides so that it has chance to cook and not simply create a puddle in the bottom.

Finally, while moisture is deemed undesired in stir-frying, I was lucky enough to meet and work with TV chef Ken Hom (sorry about the name-dropping!) and he said not to be tempted to slosh more oil into the wok if the searing and fire seems to have gone out of it – instead, add a tiny splash of water and the wok will jump to life again.

OFF THE SHELF

M&S's new range of authentic-tasting Italian dishes are real winners. Their Collection Slow Cook Beef Shin Ragu Maniche features British beef cooked in Chianti and Italian tomatoes for six hours until tender and served with pasta tubes and 24-month aged parmesan. M&S have mastered the art of Spaghetti Carbonara alla Romana in a ready meal without cream. They use the traditional recipe with egg yolk, parmesan and guanciale (a cured pork) to create an amazing classic. **Both serve one for £6.**

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& SAGE
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If tomato-based pizzas aren't your thing, try Co-op's Irresistible Butternut Squash and Sage Pizza. It has a crisp, chewy sourdough crust and is topped with creamy butternut sauce, roast butternut squash, mozzarella, sage as well as ricotta, mascarpone and Gran Levanto cheese – heaven! **£5.95 for a 474g pizza.**

INGREDIENT PROFILE

microgreens

If you've ever seen microgreens in the supermarket or in your local greengrocers and wondered what they are, they're the young edible seedlings of herbs and vegetables that are harvested just after their first leaves emerge – and it's good to know that they pack a nutritional punch, too. They have a wonderful fresh intense flavour and add lots of colour and interest to finished dishes. **B Sow Healthy Microgreens (£2.25)** supply Waitrose with a lovely trio of red mustard, garlic chives and purple radish. Perfect on salads, sandwiches and soups.

W S BENTLEY
Microgreens
MICRO IN SIZE · MASSIVE IN FLAVOUR
GROWN & PACKED IN THE UK

Dying to know

If you've ever wondered why some smoked fish is dyed and others aren't, it can often be an indication of the quality of the fish and the smoking method used. While there's nothing too ominous in dyes used on smoked fish – usually extracts of paprika and turmeric – it is worth looking out for annatto norbixin, which is a colourant from a natural seed that can sometimes cause problems for anyone who suffers with IBS.

Naturally smoked fish, with its pale off-white colour, is traditionally cold smoked over wood chips for a longer period of time, resulting in a wonderful deep, smoky flavour. Dyed fish has gone through a much quicker smoking process in an electrical smoking chamber that doesn't result in the depth of flavour and is often dyed to mimic the appearance of naturally smoked fish.

IMAGES, **ISTOCK**

OUR FAVOURITE SQUEEZE

With a myriad products available in the supermarkets, the trend for hot honey really doesn't seem to be wavering – and with good reason! Sweet, sticky and hot, this crimson honey pairs brilliantly with so many dishes. Delicious drizzled over pizzas and pretty much anything cheesy. It also makes a great finishing touch over grilled chicken or roast veggies. We drizzled just a few spoonfuls over our Sticky Chinese Pork Stir Fry on page 86 just before serving. If you fancy giving it a go, here's our quick recipe. Pour 350g honey into a small saucepan and add 2 tsp crushed chilli flakes. Heat until just bubbling and simmer for 2 minutes. Cool and stir in 1-2 tsp cider vinegar – taste to see how you prefer it. Pour into a clean jar and store in the fridge for up to three months.

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candis.co.uk/food

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Take your pick from our delicious recipes that are all created exclusively by our Food Editor, Catherine Hill.

What to eat in...
NOVEMBER

This time of year is all about big bowls of comforting food. Steaming hot and full of flavour – all our recipes this month are designed to warm you up from the inside out...

HADDOCK CHOWDER

Ready in 45 minutes Serves 4

500g haddock
1 bay leaf
600ml boiling water
50g butter
1 onion, finely chopped
2 leeks, finely chopped
2 celery sticks, finely chopped
600g potatoes, diced
200g frozen sweetcorn, defrosted
600ml milk
2 tbsp chopped curly parsley
2 tbsp chopped fresh chives
4 slices pancetta or bacon
Microgreens garlic chives to garnish (optional)

1 Place the haddock in a large frying pan with the bay leaf and boiling water. Cover loosely with foil and simmer for 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow to stand for 5 minutes. Drain, reserving the cooking water. When cool enough to handle, flake the fish, discarding the skin and any bones.

2 Heat the butter in a large saucepan, add the onion, leeks and celery and cook for 10 minutes until perfectly softened. Add the potatoes and the reserved cooking water. Bring to the boil and then gently simmer for 10 minutes until the potatoes are tender.

3 Roughly mash with a potato masher and then add the milk and sweetcorn and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the fish and simmer for 2 minutes until piping hot. Dry fry the pancetta until crisp and roughly chop. Season the chowder with plenty of black pepper and stir in the herbs. Serve scattered with the pancetta, extra fresh herbs, microgreens – if using – and plenty of fresh bread.

LENTIL AND MUSHROOM MOUSSAKA

Ready in 1 hour 45 minutes Serves 6

150g dried Puy lentils

500g Maris Piper potatoes, thinly sliced

6 tbsp olive oil

2 aubergines, sliced

500g chestnut mushrooms, sliced

3 garlic cloves, chopped

400g can chopped tomatoes

1 tbsp tomato purée

1 tsp sugar

½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp ground cinnamon

2 bay leaves

For the topping:

500g Greek yoghurt

3 eggs

75g Italian hard cheese, finely grated

100g feta, crumbled

1 Cook the lentils in a large pan of water according to the pack instructions until just tender. Drain and set to one side. Simmer the potato slices in water for 5 minutes until just tender. Drain and set to one side. Meanwhile, heat a large frying pan, add a good drizzle of oil and gently fry the aubergine slices in batches, turning frequently until tender and golden. Set to one side.

2 Heat 2 tbsp of the oil in another large, deep frying pan. Add the mushrooms and garlic and cook over a medium high heat for 10 minutes until the liquid has cooked off and the mushrooms are golden brown. Add the remaining sauce ingredients, a canful of water and season well. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the puy lentils and cook until thick and rich. Check the seasoning.

3 Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan assisted/Gas 6. Combine the topping ingredients in a bowl reserving half the hard cheese to sprinkle over the top. Season well. Spoon half of the moussaka mix into a 2-litre ovenproof dish, layer with half the aubergine and half the potatoes. Top with the second half of the moussaka mix and the remaining aubergine and potato slices. Spoon over the yoghurt topping, scatter with the reserved cheese and bake for 40 minutes or until golden.

Tip

*Hot honey is available from most supermarkets, or make your own with our delicious recipe on page 81.

ALL RECIPES CREATED EXCLUSIVELY BY **CATHERINE HILL.**
PHOTOGRAPHY **TERRY BENSON** PROP STYLING **LUIS PERAL**

STICKY CHINESE PORK STEAKS

Ready in 45 minutes plus marinating Serves 4

- 4 pork loin steaks, thickly sliced
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 250g Itsu ramen noodles
- 1 tsp black sesame seeds (optional)
- Sprig of coriander

For the marinade:

- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tsp grated fresh ginger
- 1 tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp Chinese Five Spice

For the stir fry:

- 4 spring onions, finely sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 red chilli, deseeded and finely sliced
- 200g Tenderstem broccoli, cut into bite-size pieces
- 200g sugar snaps, halved
- 4 baby pak choi, halved
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 4 tbsp hot honey*

1 Combine the marinade ingredients in a large flat dish, add the pork and turn until coated. Cover and chill for 30 minutes or overnight to marinate. Heat a large wok until searing hot, add half the oil and swirl until the pan is coated.

2 Add the pork and stir fry for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally until sticky, lightly charred and cooked through. Set to one side and keep warm. Cook the noodles according to the pack instructions, drain and set to one side.

3 Wipe the pan out with kitchen roll, reheat and add the remaining oil. Add the spring onion, garlic and chilli and stir fry for 1 minute. Add the Tenderstem broccoli and fry for 3 minutes, add a tablespoon of water if the wok stops sizzling. Add the sugar snaps and pak choi and cook for 2-3 minutes. Stir in the soy sauce and remove from the heat.

4 Return the pork and any cooking juices to the pan and combine well. Serve on the hot noodles, scatter with the black sesame seeds and add a sprig of coriander. Drizzle with hot honey and serve.

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WINTER WONDERS

With the right choice of fragrant plants, you will be drawn outdoors on even the dullest winter days, says **Anne Swithinbank**

Shorter winter days and reduced sunlight are a challenge. Rather than 'putting the garden to bed' and retreating indoors, aim to spend as much time out there as you can. This is the ideal way to enjoy and improve the structure or 'bones' of your garden, get the balance of deciduous and evergreen shrubs and add plants for fragrant winter flowers.

Winter gardening is good for mind, body and soul, but start slowly, allowing muscles to warm up. Before you know it, the low winter sun will be firing up a pink and orange sunset signalling time to clean tools and stow them safely away. There's a surprising amount to do in winter, especially if, like me, you give priority to wildlife. Having held back from hefty shrub pruning during the nesting season, now's a good time to catch up with shaping and thinning.

The list of fragrant winter-flowering plants is surprisingly long and, carefully sited in sheltered nooks, their scents linger on calm days. Plan a succession throughout the season and find work to do near each plant. When our *Viburnum farreri* opens its pale pink flowers, I'll opt to grub out the roots of brambles invading from a nearby hedge. After Christmas, *Daphne odora* wafts sweet scent across the front garden, a cue for shaping the lawn edges opposite. The scents are produced to attract pollinating insects and as there are few on the wing during winter, flowers open over a long period.

Plant witch hazels along pathways to entice the family outside. Christmas box flourishes in the shady nook under the window of our downstairs cloakroom, so the perfume from small white flowers of this dense evergreen can float in the open window as a natural air freshener. Snippets arranged in vases with foliage of ivy or *Arum italicum* 'Marmoratum' will bring a little of the outdoors in.

Mahonias are a group of spiky-leaved architectural evergreens whose showy yellow flowers open in midwinter. Most are cultivars of *M.* x *media*, such as 'Winter Sun' or 'Charity', and produce a scent similar to lily-of-the-valley. Hardy, easy to grow and happiest in light shade, they make tall plants, but by pruning one or two older stems after flowering, size is controlled and new growth encouraged.

For a sunny wall or fence, the almost glistening cream and purple blooms of wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox* 'Grandiflorus') have a fresh, lemon scent. This, the white forsythia (*Abeliophyllum distichum*) and vanilla-scented *Azara microphylla* all bloom in late winter.

Most winter-flowering shrubs originate from light woodland and will thrive in good, well-draining soils enriched with mulches of well-rotted garden compost or leaf mould. Fill the spaces beneath with pools of small spring-flowering bulbs, ferns, shade-loving cranesbills and astrantias. Plant deciduous kinds in winter as long as soil is not waterlogged or frozen. On heavy clay soils that tend to stay cold and waterlogged, or when dealing with evergreens, plant in spring or autumn. From late November until March, the sweet scents of winter can certainly rival those of the milder seasons.

MUST-HAVE WINTER BEAUTIES

CHINESE WITCH HAZEL *(HAMAMELIS MOLLIS)*

The many cultivars of witch hazel open spidery blooms of yellow or shades of burnt orange and red. Most have some scent. For me the sweetest is from yellow-flowered Chinese witch hazel. They enjoy shelter from strong winds and good, well-drained neutral to acidic soil.

WINTER-FLOWERING HONEYSUCKLE *(LONICERA X PURPUSII)*

Winter-flowering honeysuckles make rather ungainly deciduous shrubs reaching about 1.8m (6ft) high. Unless trained against a wall, they are best grown at the back of a border. In winter, they redeem themselves by sending out a strong, sweet scent from small cream flowers.

HOUSEPLANT OF THE MONTH

AESCHYNANTHUS RADICANS

Lipstick vines are clad with pairs of shapely leaves and in summer, red flowers push through maroon calyces like lipstick from a tube. It is amazing that miles from their origins in the humid rain forests of Thailand and Malaysia, these plants thrive in our homes. They are mainly epiphytic, meaning their roots grow in nooks and crannies of tree branches rather than in the ground. Their sensitive root systems require careful watering. Good but direct light is best, and room temperatures above 13°C (55°F).

NOVEMBER CLIPPINGS

Control thickets of bamboo by thinning the stems and removing lower branches for a lighter effect.

Leave fallen apples for butterflies to suck fermenting juices and for birds to eat. In this bumper year, they'll attract redwings and fieldfares. Do watch out for wasps.

Take hardwood cuttings of hardy deciduous shrubs including fruit bushes, making them 10-23cm (4-9in) long depending on type. Trim below a node at the base and above one at the top, make a slit trench in good, open soil, and insert 13cm (5in) apart, buried by two thirds their length.

Plant garlic in a sunny bed of well-drained soil by setting individual cloves pointed end up and basal plate down 15cm (6in) apart in rows 30cm (12in) apart, their tips buried by 2.5cm (1in) of soil.

Plant tulips in borders and containers for spring displays. Choose shorter ones for windy sites and species types for gravel gardens. The latter usually flower reliably every year, whereas the cultivars often don't.

PHOTOS ISTOCK, GAPPHOTOS, ALAMY

DESIGN KNOW-HOW

Our average-sized, well-planted suburban garden feels enclosed. How can we introduce views and vistas?

I'm imagining a rectangular lawn edged by beds, enclosed by fencing and surrounded by other gardens. Against a green background, planting a purple or gold-leaved tree or shrub will draw the eye in summer. Long term, plant a hedge across the garden three quarters of the way down to create a false boundary. A gap or dip in this can then reveal a bench, plant, or a group of birches, against the true boundary.

GOLD RUSH

Tom Hibbert from **The Wildlife Trusts** introduces a delightful, tiny bird making a giant journey

GOLDCREST (C) JOHN BRIDGES

The goldcrest is Europe's smallest bird. At first glance, they're a little unassuming. Greyish-green, small and so round they sometimes seem spherical. Their large eyes and tiny beak add to their cuteness. But if you get a good look, they're showstoppers. On their crown they sport a dazzling stripe of golden-yellow, framed by a striking black band. Males take it a step further, with a fiery orange wash to the centre of their yellow crest. The ultimate accessory!

TINY TRAVELLERS

For a bird that weighs less than a 2p coin, long flights must be a particularly daunting prospect. But that doesn't stop huge numbers of goldcrests from migrating to the UK each autumn. They travel from Scandinavia and other parts of northern Europe, crossing the North Sea on the way. It is incredible to think that these small birds fly non-stop over miles and miles of exposed open water.

GOLDCREST (C) JANET PACKHAM

GOLDCREST (C) LOGAN WALKER

FEATHERED FAIRIES

Watching a goldcrest is always a delight. They're restless birds, moving from branch to branch as they search for food. They prefer conifer trees, using their thin beak to pluck insects from between the needles. It can be hard to follow them as they flit among the leaves, sometimes pausing to hover like a hummingbird.

The experience is made even more magical by the sounds they make. They're constantly calling to each other in thin, high-pitched notes. But you'll need sharp ears to hear them. The voice of the goldcrest is so high, some people struggle to hear it, especially later in life.

CUDDLE CULTURE

Winter is a challenging time for a tiny bird. On cold nights, goldcrests burn through their fat reserves as they try to stay warm. It's reported that they can lose up to 20 per cent of their bodyweight in a single night. That's why they spend so much of their waking time feeding, replenishing their reserves. When it comes to surviving the winter, every calorie counts!

Goldcrests do have one trick to improve their odds – and it's adorable. In very low temperatures, they often roost in groups, huddled up together on a branch, cuddling in close. This helps them to reduce heat loss and preserve their energy.

Find migratory birds near you at
wildlifetrusts.org/see-bird-migration

The Wildlife Trusts

WINTER BREAKS ON A BUDGET

With winter sun established as its own holiday season, there's never been more choice over where to go to escape the cold. **Tristan Parker** has affordable ways to get away in style

As the winter months approach, daydreams of warmer weather can quickly evolve into online bookings to make that dream a reality. With expensive flights and long flight times, jaunts to the Caribbean will be off the cards for many, but thankfully, Europe is packed with sunnier winter spots. Even within Europe, though, it can be costly to flee the freeze so we've picked out some budget-friendly European winter getaways.

As sunshine will be top of the must-haves for many, three of our four picks focus on literal hotspots, where you'll likely encounter good conditions and possibly reasonably toasty temperatures.

But although winter sun has its merits, some people will instead be after a trip that feels enjoyably wintry, rather than the grey, dreary conditions we're so familiar with in the UK. For this group, we've selected a blissfully wintery location that's under the radar, so keeps costs low.

Pricewise, the good news is that visiting any of these destinations off peak will naturally cut your costs even before you arrive. And each of our picks is known for its relative affordability.

So, read on and ready yourself for a visit to the winter wonderland you've always wanted to experience, rather than the one you don't have much choice about.

MÁLAGA, SPAIN

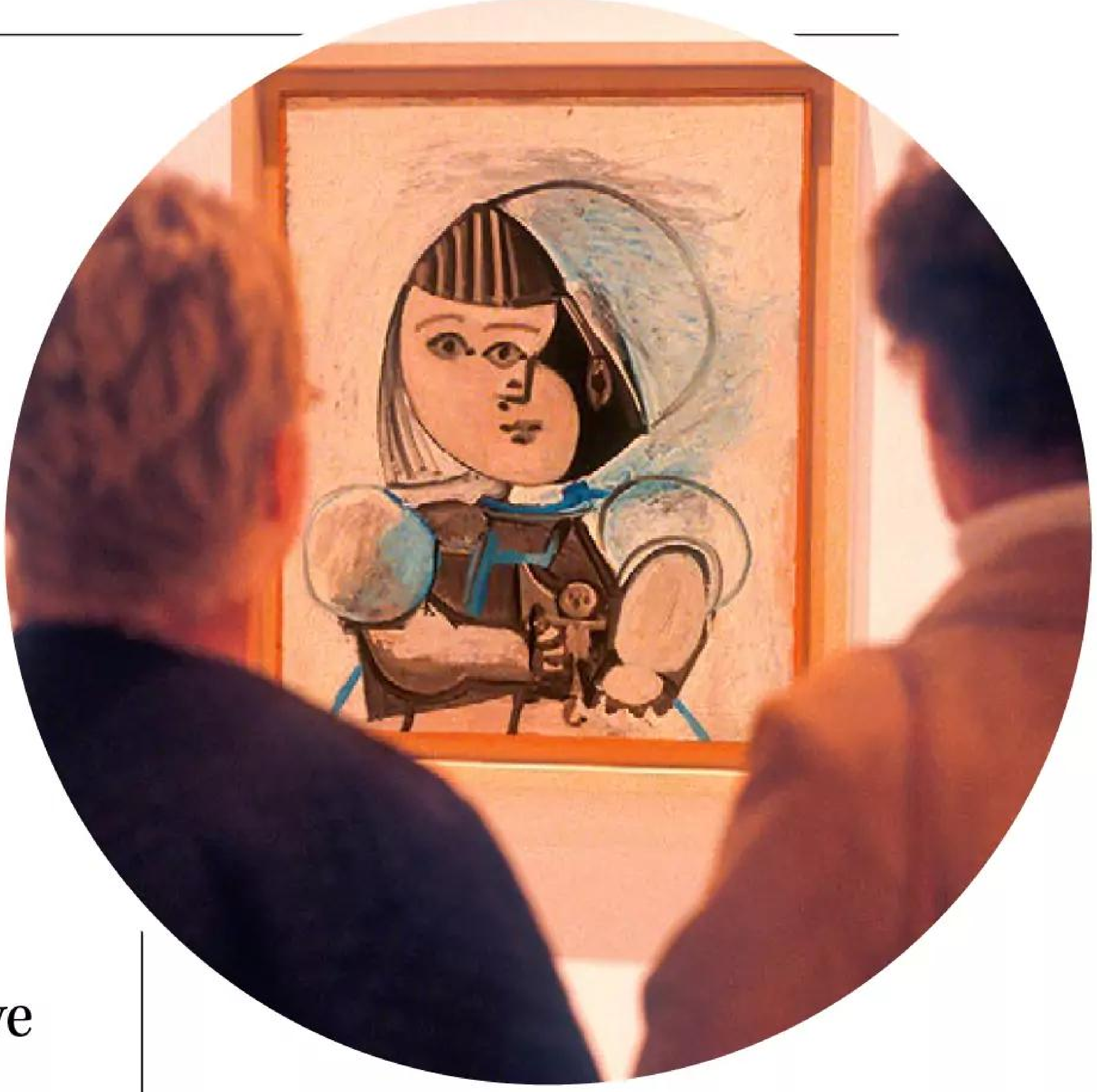
BEST FOR: DINING AND CULTURE

Málaga is a city of contrasts. As the Costa del Sol's capital, some paint it as a place solely for nightlife. While that does exist, you can have a long and varied holiday here especially in winter.

The city has a complex history, still very much visible in architecture and archaeological sites, covering everything from Roman ruins to handsome Renaissance edifices. And the dining and bar scenes here are second-to-none if you swerve the tourist traps, which is easily done. The arty Soho neighbourhood is a great bet for smaller, local bars and restaurants.

As for that winter sun, temperatures in December and January average out at around 13°C, with highs of up to 17-18°C. The main city area boasts an impressive 16 beaches, meaning you can easily step on to the sand after sightseeing in the Centro Histórico – popular La Malagueta Beach is superbly convenient for this, but it's worth journeying out to quieter, more scenic spots, such as locally favoured Pedregalejo, to the east.

Galleries and museums open year-round. As with any destination housing a significant British expat community, plenty of Christmas festivities take place if you want to dip in, but it's easy to avoid if you don't.



DON'T MISS: MUSEO PICASSO MÁLAGA

There's no shortage of reminders about Málaga's most famous son, but one essential is this museum in a 16th-century building. Opened in 2003 – half a century after Pablo himself floated the idea – it features more than 230 Picasso works, plus temporary exhibitions from related and influenced artists.

CYPRUS

BEST FOR: BEACHES AND HISTORY

The Med's third-largest island is well-known for its bountiful sunshine and affordable cost of living, making it a shoo-in for cheap winter sun. Even December and January enjoy around six hours a day of sun and maximum temperatures of 17-18°C.

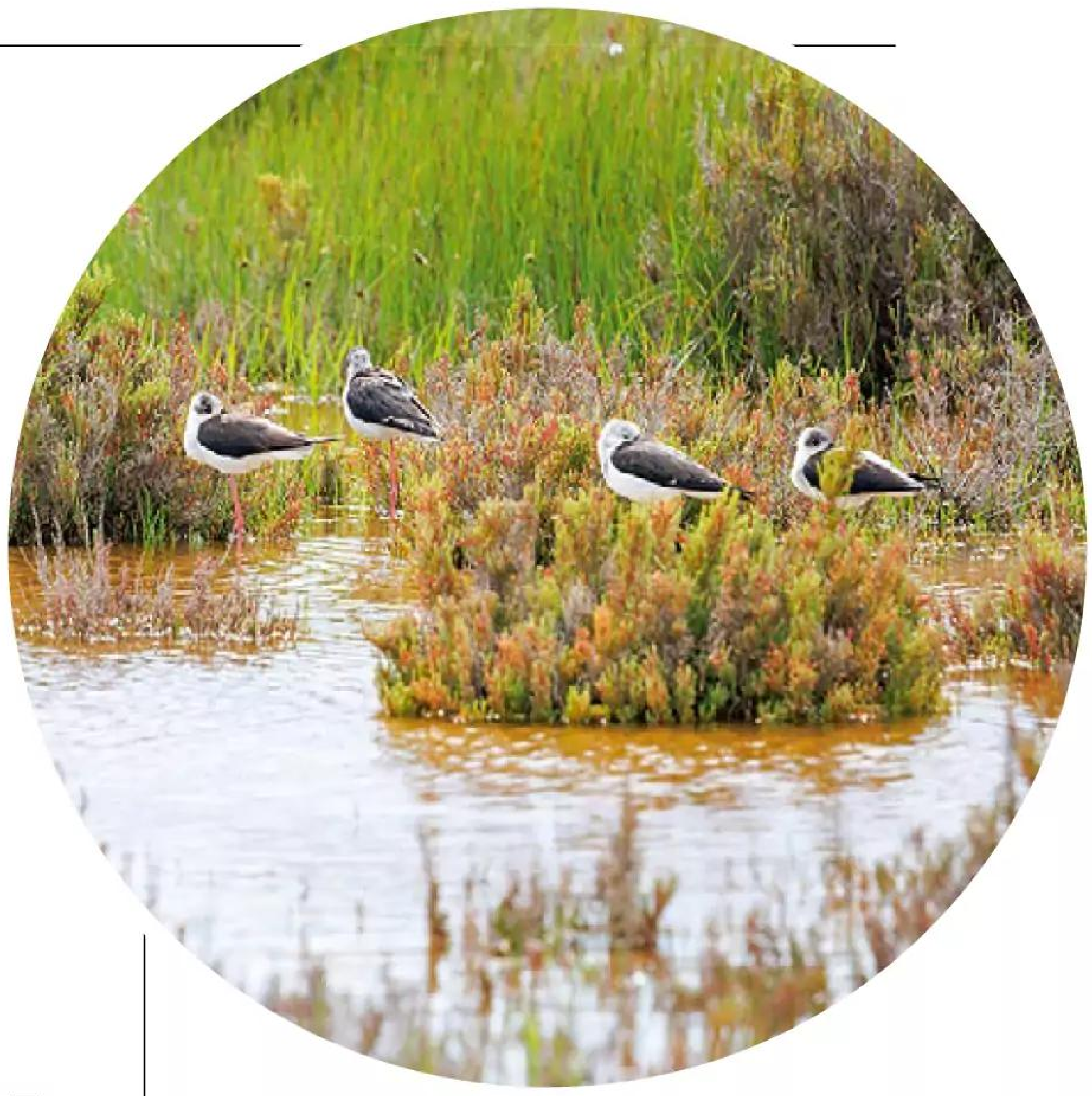
There are several coastal hubs on the island's south coast that visitors navigate to for accommodation, chiefly Paphos, Limassol and Larnaca, each offering a mix of sun, sea, sand and glimpses into ancient Cyprus. Paphos provides a little more of this last element, plus a relaxed atmosphere and a charming harbour area to stroll through. Compact Larnaca also has a laid-back vibe, while Limassol is larger and livelier, boasting more activities, even through winter.

If history and cultural pursuits appeal, consider a trip to the capital, Nicosia. It's inland, meaning no beaches, but worth a day trip if you're staying elsewhere, for its ancient churches and mosques, Medieval Venetian walls and museums.

Beach-wise, you won't be far from at least a few fantastic beaches if you stay in any of the popular coastal cities – a car will help you access some of the best. The sea will be a little chilly for most people during winter, but the beaches still look just as inviting.

DON'T MISS: KATO PAFOS ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

If you're staying in Paphos – or even if you're not – make sure to visit this extensive and fascinating site. Some remnants here date back to the 4th century BC, although most are from later Roman times, famously including several Roman villas housing intricate mosaics based on Greek mythology.



FARO, PORTUGAL

BEST FOR: DAY TRIPS AND GREAT WINE

While Portugal's popularity as a holiday destination has gradually pushed up prices in the big-draw cities of Lisbon and Porto, the Algarve's capital remains refreshingly affordable, and easily one of the sunniest cities in the country thanks to its location in the far south. Temperatures in December and January can reach highs of 16-17°C.

Staying in or near Faro's Old Town – Cidade Velha – gives you access to the heart of the city and its many inviting restaurants and wine bars. Try A Venda for authentic Algarve cuisine in a homely setting, and Epicur for excellent and affordable homegrown wine.

Faro is also great if you're bringing the kids on your winter sun holiday. Restaurants are helpful and accommodating, while venues such as the Algarve Living Science Center and family-friendly beaches will keep young ones entertained. Winter beach-wise, the long narrow strip of golden sand at Praia de Faro is a fine city beach, but it's worth travelling out to the likes of Lagos, Carvoeiro or Albufeira for some stunners – all three spots can be reached by public transport, but driving is simpler and quicker.

DON'T MISS: PARQUE NATURAL DA RIA FORMOSA

Boat trips around this sprawling natural park and its various wetlands, marshes and lagoons operate year-round (weather dependent). Try exploring the strange, surreal landscape of Ilha Deserta – one of the park's barrier islands – via its snaking boardwalk, ending back at Restaurante Estaminé for a glass of vinho verde.

RIGA, LATVIA

BEST FOR: WINTER DONE PROPERLY

The Latvian capital feels like a relatively undiscovered destination, especially in winter, since many visitors confine their Riga trips to sunnier months. But winter has its own enticments – one of cosy cafes and bars – where strolling through a green park is replaced by wandering along snow-dusted streets lined with beautiful buildings.

The highest church in Riga, St Peter's, offers views from its soaring tower. The cavernous Central Market is great if you want to escape the cold. Housed in a former aircraft hangar, it's bursting with fresh Latvian produce and ready-to-eat treats. Riga also has an impressive annual Christmas market.

When you need to warm up, duck into one of those cosy cafes or bars and indulge in the local tipple: Riga Black Balsam, a herbal liqueur with a kick that's bitter, spiced, sweet and added to anything from coffee to desserts. You'll soon forget about the cold.

Go deeper into winter by heading out of the city and into nearby forests. The Mežtaka forest hiking trail passes through all three Baltic states, with the Latvian section running through Riga's old town into thick forests. You could opt for woodland accommodation during your stay. Forest cabins, cottages and huts can be rented within reach of Riga.

DON'T MISS: ART NOUVEAU ARCHITECTURE

Riga is awash with beautiful architecture, particularly its hundreds of Art Nouveau buildings, a style that became popular in the city during the early 20th century. You'll find much of it in a district known as the Quiet Center, a short distance from the old town.

PHOTOS ISTOCK, ADOBE STOCK, ROBERT HARDING, ALAMY

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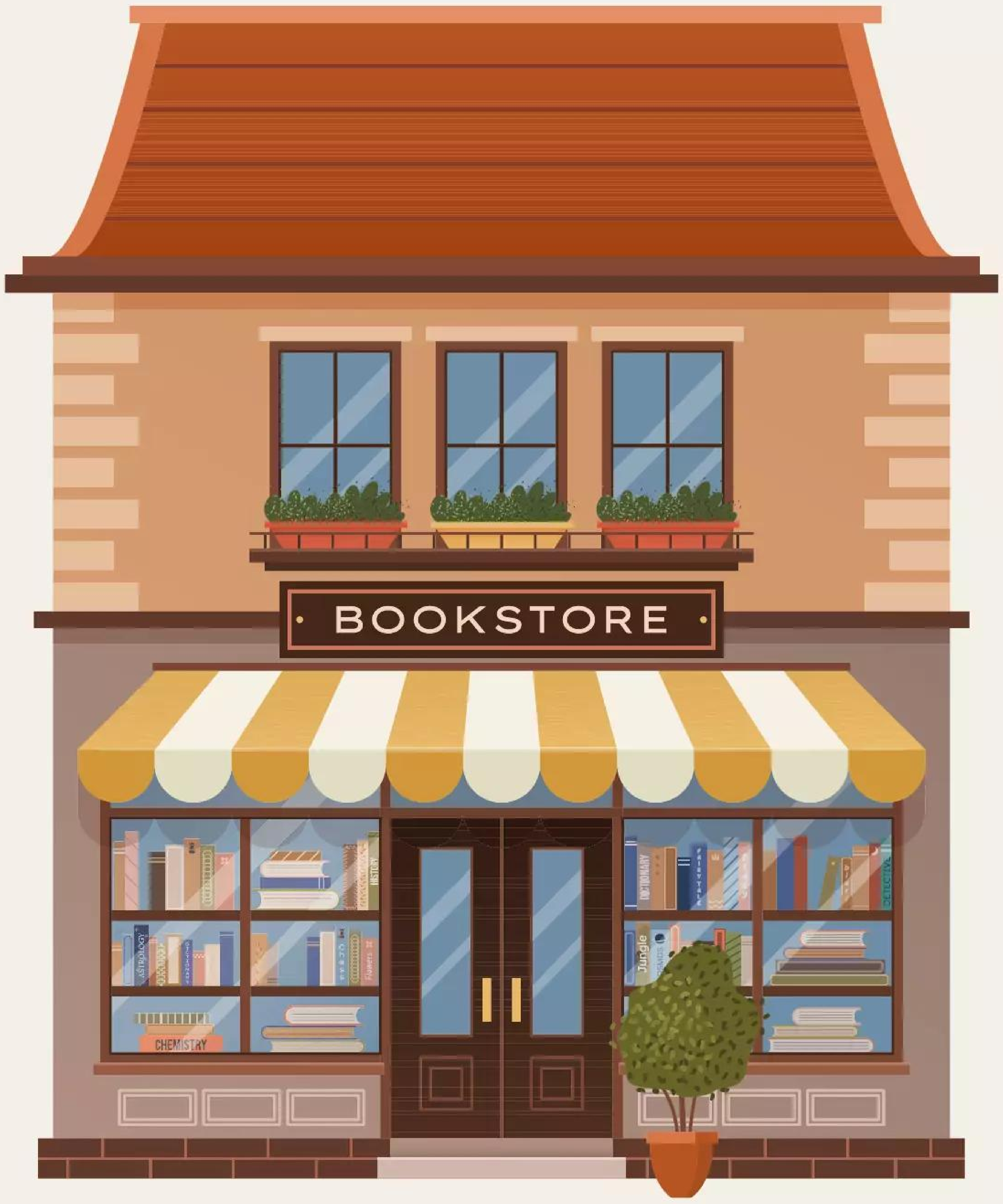
CLUB SAVINGS

Never judge a book

A chance meeting in a bookshop leads to more than one surprise for Amber in this short story by **Phillipa Ashley**



The man next to Amber in the queue pushed back his jacket sleeve to check his watch. "I wonder how much longer this is going to take," he muttered.

"I think it could be a while. Quentin Moone seems to be very popular."

Amber scanned the line of people ahead of her, several of whom were sitting on their rollators or taking advantage of the book shop's chairs.

Tonight was the latest in a series of author events at Bookends, Amber's local bookshop. Sometimes, she attended the events with her book club friends, but they'd all been busy on the night that Quentin Moone, '1960s pop icon and Sunday Times bestseller', was visiting.

It wasn't the biggest of spaces and Quentin's fans seemed to occupy every corner of it. At least they were all cosy and dry, because the rain was lashing down outside and the gusty wind had blown leaves into the shop that had to be swept out by the staff.

"Hmm." The man looked over the heads of the queue and sighed. "There must be at least 20 ahead of us. I had no idea that this guy would be so popular."

"You're not a fan, then?" Amber asked.

"Um...," he lowered his voice. "I'd heard of him, but he wasn't on my radar until my mum told me he was doing an event and signing here." He turned his face towards Amber, who suddenly felt like she was at school and being asked a question about a subject she'd done no revision for. It didn't help that he was at least a foot taller than her and had to look down. "What about you?"

Amber gasped. "What do you mean? I've grown up with Quentin, my gran worships him.

She once fainted at one of his concerts and had to be carried out by the bouncers."

"Oh." The man flashed an awkward smile. "My apologies. I'm sure he was a brilliant musician in his day, and he's clearly very well liked."

Amber was glad that she hadn't revealed that her gran had actually thrown a pair of frilly knickers at Quentin during a concert. She didn't think this rather serious man would be impressed.

"Why are you here, then?" she asked. "As you're clearly not a fan."

"I want to get a signed copy for my Great Auntie Rose. She also loved Quentin. She's gone to Llandudno for an autumn break, or she'd have come with me herself."

"I'm getting a copy for Gran's birthday," Amber admitted. "And actually, I was teasing you." She lowered her voice. "I'm not personally a fan of Quentin, but I know Gran will be so excited when I give her his memoir on my next visit. She lives in Cornwall."

There was a sudden outburst of laughter and a volley of excited squeals.

"What's happening?" Amber asked, standing on tiptoes.

The man craned his neck. "Selfies," he said.

Eventually, Amber got her gran's book signed while the man – Ben – went to pay for his at the counter. She knew his name because Quentin, pen poised, had asked him and Ben had replied hastily, "It's Ben, but the book is for my Auntie Rose, not for me."

Amber paid and then noticed Ben was by the door, leafing through a novel on the display.

"Oh, do you like Maxi Trevelyan?" she said, impressed.

For the past few years Maxi's epic tales of romance set in a fantasy world of Cornish myths and legends had entranced her. "I've got all of hers. She's brilliant. I wish she'd do an event but she's said to be incredibly shy."

"Is she?" Ben murmured. "I must try one sometime. See you soon, I hope."

"Oh, hello. I didn't know you were a Harold The Hedgehog afficionado," said Ben, holding the bookshop door open for Amber when she arrived for the next author event.

"I am, actually, or rather my niece is," Amber said, amused. "What about you?"

"Oh, huge. In fact, I'm probably Harold's biggest fan. He's had to take out a restraining order on me, to be honest. I stalk him."

Amber laughed so loudly that several people turned away from the shelves and stared at her and Ben. Even if he probably wasn't into Maxi Trevelyan, he had a great sense of humour.

"I'm here to get some early Christmas presents," Ben explained. "A niece, a nephew and a friend's toddler."

"I'm here for my twin goddaughters. It's not every day you get to meet the author and the illustrator at one event. I'm dying to know how they work together to bring Harold to life."

"Yes, I write for a living – I'm a journalist – but I can't draw to save my life."

They sat in the front row of chairs that had been arranged around the 'author stage'.

"I'm Amber, by the way," she said.

He shook hands. "Pleased to meet you properly. I'm Ben."

"I know."

His eyes widened. "How?"

> "I've grown up with Quentin, my gran worships him. She once fainted at one of his concerts and had to be carried out by the bouncers"

"I heard Quentin ask you."

He blew out a breath. "I kicked myself as soon as I'd told him, but fortunately I managed to stop him signing his autobiography to me rather than Auntie Rose." Ben lowered his voice. "You know, I heard he didn't actually write it himself."

"No!" Amber said, then added. "I did wonder, although Gran would be shocked. How do you know Quentin had a ghost writer?"

"I'm a journalist. I write a lot of features on books and the arts. I heard on the grapevine." He tapped his nose. "Do you write, yourself?"

She scoffed. "Only reports. Though you could say I do get involved in a lot of tall stories. I'm a fraud investigator for a bank."

"Wow. I'm impressed. No one could pull the wool over your eyes."

He gave her his journalist scrutinising look again. "How did you get into that?"

"I used to work in general admin at the banking centre, but when the chance came to train as a fraud investigator, I took it."

"And you enjoy it?"

"Oh yes. It's fascinating to see what people will do to scam others. On the flipside, it's very satisfying to help victims recover their money."

A round of applause greeted Harold's creators as they walked on to the 'stage'.

Amber couldn't concentrate fully on the first few minutes of their Q&A. She hadn't told Ben the full story of why she moved to the fraud department because she was still too embarrassed. Amber had once been the victim of an online dating scam.

> "She'd fallen for a trickster and believed he was genuinely in love with her. The experience had made her wary of relationships"

She'd fallen for a man, met him in real life a few times and almost sent him two grand because he'd said he was in temporary difficulties with his rent. Just in time, she'd realised what she was about to do and pulled back from the brink. The man had turned nasty and she'd reported him to the police.

"At least you haven't lost any money to the lying scumbag," her book club friends had consoled her. While grateful for their support, Amber still felt cheated and deeply hurt. She'd fallen for a trickster and believed he was genuinely in love with her. The experience had made her wary of relationships, but it had inspired her to take the opportunity to join the fraud department.

After Harold's creators had entertained the audience, Amber and Ben queued for their books. They stayed long enough to have a drink and a Harold Hedgehog-themed cupcake before going their separate ways.

"Maybe I'll see you at the next signing?" Ben said.

"It's Penny Hedges," Amber said, and was about to say that cosy crime wasn't really her thing when Ben looked smitten.

"I love her books. The plots are so good and I never see the twists coming. Though I prefer the Detective McManus series to her Bournemouth Noir ones, if I'm honest."

"I must admit I haven't read any," Amber said.

"Oh? You're missing a great read, but if that's not your thing, maybe I'll see you at a different event."

"Well, I never thought I'd buy a Penny Hedges, but her talk was so gripping, I had to try a couple especially as they're set in Cornwall."

"I think you'll be a convert," Ben said. "Though it was someone close who actually got me into them. I have her to thank for that." His face lit up when he mentioned 'someone close'.

"Oh?" Amber's voice came out higher than she'd expected. She clutched her bag of Penny Hedges hardbacks tighter. "Your – um – friend is a crime fan too?"

"My friend?" A secretive smile spread over his face. "Oh, yes I was determined not to go over to the dark side but she can be very persuasive."

Amber smiled, too, but inside her spirits were as flat as a Harold the Hedgehog poster. She might have known a lovely, handsome, well-read man like Ben would have someone special in his life. She just hadn't thought to ask, too caught up in a fantasy world. Well, in real life, you didn't meet someone really nice and rather gorgeous in a bookshop.

She, of all people, should have known that if something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Amber gave the horror night a miss but she was first on the list for a surprise pre-Christmas event. Maxi Trevelyan had chosen little Bookends to launch her new epic as part of her first ever book tour.

Tickets had sold out within a day. Wine and nibbles had been laid on and 'merch' in the form of bookmarks and tote bags had been provided for purchasers of the hardback.

Amber went with two friends from her book group. Snow was falling softly as they entered the shop where the buzz of excitement hit them the moment they walked in. The place was packed with fans of Maxi's sweeping love stories, intricate plots and her always-sparring hero and heroine, who were from two fictional tribes.

The bookshop staff were looking rather nervous and trying to find extra chairs, and three tables were piled high with glossy hardbacks. Amber heard the manager trying to turn away people without tickets.

On the empty 'stage', the manager was chatting to a woman in a green trouser suit who Amber overheard was Maxi's literary agent. Amber felt a thrill of excitement at being about to see the elusive Maxi at last, and the fact that Ben had given the event a miss was a relief.

Seven-thirty came and went. The manager spoke in hushed tones to Maxi's agent who glanced anxiously at the door to the bookshop staff room. After a brief discussion, the manager stepped forward.

> "Snow was falling softly as they entered the shop where the buzz of excitement hit them the moment they walked in"

"Ladies and gentlemen, I know you have all made a huge effort to be here. We are so grateful that Maxi has chosen our little bookshop for the first stop on her book tour. She will be here in just a moment and we apologise for the short delay..."

"Sorry!" The gasp was audible as Ben strode out of the door and on to the 'stage'.

Amber gripped the edge of her chair and exchanged amazed looks with her friends. Surely Ben wasn't actually Maxi?

"Erm, I'm not Maxi," he said, smiling nervously. "Obviously." A few people laughed.

"But I am her brother. This is the very first event she has ever done, and it took some persuading, as she is a very shy person. However, it was a conversation I had with a special booklover in this very shop that actually led to this evening. When Maxi heard that one of her biggest fans would be here, and how well-loved her books are, she was finally persuaded to do an event."

Amber almost fainted.

"So, without further ado," he declared, "here she is – the brilliant Maxi Trevelyan."

A moment later, to rapturous applause, Maxi walked out, blushing but looking excited, too.

The hour whizzed by, with Amber gripped by Maxi's Q&A session. She was first in the signing queue and Maxi insisted on giving her an exclusive signed notebook and bookmark.

Amber was in heaven.

While her friends had their books signed, she finally found Ben at the rear of the queue. "You kept that a secret! I didn't even know you read Maxi's books, let alone she was your sister!"

"I am sorry, it was your enthusiasm that inspired me to suggest Maxi tried out this small shop. I thought you deserved to meet your favourite author and I knew my sister would love meeting the people who love her books."

Amber laughed. "I think I can forgive you, just this once."

Amber left with her book club mates, who still didn't know that she was the fan who'd inspired Maxi to conquer her shyness. She also didn't show them the copy Ben had slipped into her bag, and certainly not the message, which read: Please call me if you'd like to talk about books etc. Harolds' biggest fan x

Underneath he'd drawn a hedgehog – very badly – and added his mobile number.

As they headed out into the snow, Amber smiled to herself. Occasionally, against all the odds, things turned out to be even better than they seemed.

Phillipa Ashley is the author of *All We Want for Christmas*, published by Penguin on 6 November 2025. See our review on page 12.

ILLUSTRATIONS ISTOCK

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Candis
CLUB SAVINGS

WIN
ALL-TERRAIN WALKING SHOES

These new WK500 Leather Walking Shoes from **KEEN** are perfect for weekend strolls and adventure

THREE PRIZES WORTH £120 EACH

KEEN

Getting out and about in the fresh air is good for us and adequate footwear is important to keep feet warm, dry and well-supported in all weathers. Made from environmentally friendly nubuck leather, these hardy WK500 Leather Walking Shoes have a contoured fit which follows the contours of your foot for a snug and comfortable, tailor-made feel – and we've three pairs up for grabs. These must-have walking shoes also have KEEN.CURVE from toe to heel for non-stop propulsion and a padded tongue and collar for extra comfort. The KEEN. ALL_TERRAIN rubber outsole has super traction for a better grip in inclement weather.

Winners can choose a pair of his or her styles in a range of exciting colourways including Abbey/Stone, Grey/Black and Star White/Skyway.

Make your foot health a priority by entering our competition today!

For more details and to buy, please visit **keenfootwear.co.uk**

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win, answer the following question...

On average, for how many minutes a day are adults advised to take a brisk walk?

A 20-30 minutes

B 90 minutes

C 120 minutes

Fill out the form on **page 135**, call our hotline on **0844 545 7821*** or enter on our website at **candis.co.uk/win/competitions**. Closing date is 30 November 2025.

GORGEOUS GIVEAWAYS

We've fantastic prizes for all the family!

OFFER 1
SLICE AND DICE

Slice, chop, and prep with confidence using OXO's expertly designed kitchen tools. The new Precision Hand-Held Mandoline makes uniform slicing effortless, with four thickness settings and built-in julienne blades in a compact design. For maximum versatility, the Chef's Mandoline is a true kitchen essential, offering 21 different cuts with straight, wavy, julienne and French fry blades. The OXO Chopper takes the hassle out of food prep, with a sharp stainless-steel blade that rotates with each press to deliver evenly cut vegetables, herbs, nuts and more. We have a slicing bundle from OXO to give away worth £130 (oxouk.com). Take the fuss out of cooking and put confidence back in your hands with this great offer.

OFFER 3
DRYING DAYS

Designed to make laundry loads easier, this heated airer from Beldray features 18 heated bars and 12m of drying space. The sturdy aluminium frame holds up to 15kg, while its fast heat-up time saves you time on washing bedding, clothes and more. Lightweight and foldable, it conveniently collapses for compact storage, making it a practical, cost-effective alternative to tumble drying (beldray.com). We've two heated airers up for grabs worth £49 each – enter our amazing giveaway today!

OFFER 2 SCREEN-SMART

Designed to inspire creativity without the distractions or risks of open internet access, the innovative Pad Creator Instant Print Tablet integrates a 5MP camera with six creative modes and a thermal printer to bring ideas to life without ink, cables or fuss. We've one Pad Creator Instant Print Tablet up for grabs worth £129.99 (smythstoys.com). Whether designing digital art, crafting custom cards, printing a photo journal or searching for inspiration online, the Pad Creator Instant Print Tablet allows youngsters to turn ideas into tangible creations in minutes – draw, design, write, photograph, film and print, all from one easy-to-use device.

To Do List
MY BIRTHDAY PARTY

OFFER 4 THE DREAM CLEAN

Founded by influencer, Luke Arnel-Cameron (Lopwert), Yass Clean has turned into a cleaning revolution, creating products that work – and smell divine. The brand, which makes fun, fabulous and affordable cleaning solutions, has become the fastest growing brand on TikTok Shop since its launch, selling over 350,000 units (yassclean.co.uk). We've a fab bundle of Yass products worth over £160 to give away, including washing pods, scent boosters, non-bio detergent, foam cleaners, microfibre cloths, stain removers and more!

OFFER 5
FOOT RESCUE

It's World Diabetes Day on 14 November and if you're one of the estimated 5.8 million in the UK living with the condition, you'll know the importance of maintaining a healthy footcare regime. Footmender® All in One Diabetic is a multi-functional footcare product that treats and heals dry skin, calluses, corns and heel fissures. One product is enough and you will see an effect within a few days, often after the very first treatment. We have four Footmender All in One Diabetic® 150ml to give away worth £36.99 each. Available from Boots (in store and online), amazon.co.uk and podiatrists.

OFFER 6
NAUGHTY OR NICE?

It's almost time for the Elves to fly back from the North Pole to have festive fun with their families. We have three elf-tastic bundles to give away worth over £50 each (elfontheshelf.co.uk). Each prize contains The Original Elf on the Shelf Box Set – The Tradition Continues with a Scout Elf® mascot. In the Elf on the Shelf SnoBiggie Little Grunt Yeti & Book, kids will adore the tale of Little Grunt, the big little yeti with a big heart. In Frost Pips™ Boy & Girl, watch these baby elves bloom from frost flowers. In Elf Mates Toy Maker, the Elf Mates are back and ready to inspire children with acts of kindness and generosity.

Enter online at **candis.co.uk/giveaways**, call **0844 545 7825** or fill out the form on page 135. Closing date 30 November 2025.

COMPILED BY **SALLY EVANS**. CALLS TO 084 NUMBERS COST 5P A MINUTE PLUS YOUR PHONE COMPANY'S ACCESS CHARGE. TS&CS APPLY – SEE CANDIS.CO.UK/GIVEAWAYS
*RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICING. PRICING IS AT THE SOLE DISCRETION OF THE RETAILER

TAKE A **BREAK**

SIX CHANCES TO WIN PRIZES!

Treat yourself a little me-time to enjoy our packed puzzle pages. If you get stuck, turn to page 134, **or enter your prize answers on page 135**

WORDSEARCH

FIND ALL THE LISTED ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GUNPOWDER PLOT IN THE GRID. Words may be listed vertically, horizontally, backwards or on the diagonal, but must always be in a straight, unbroken line.

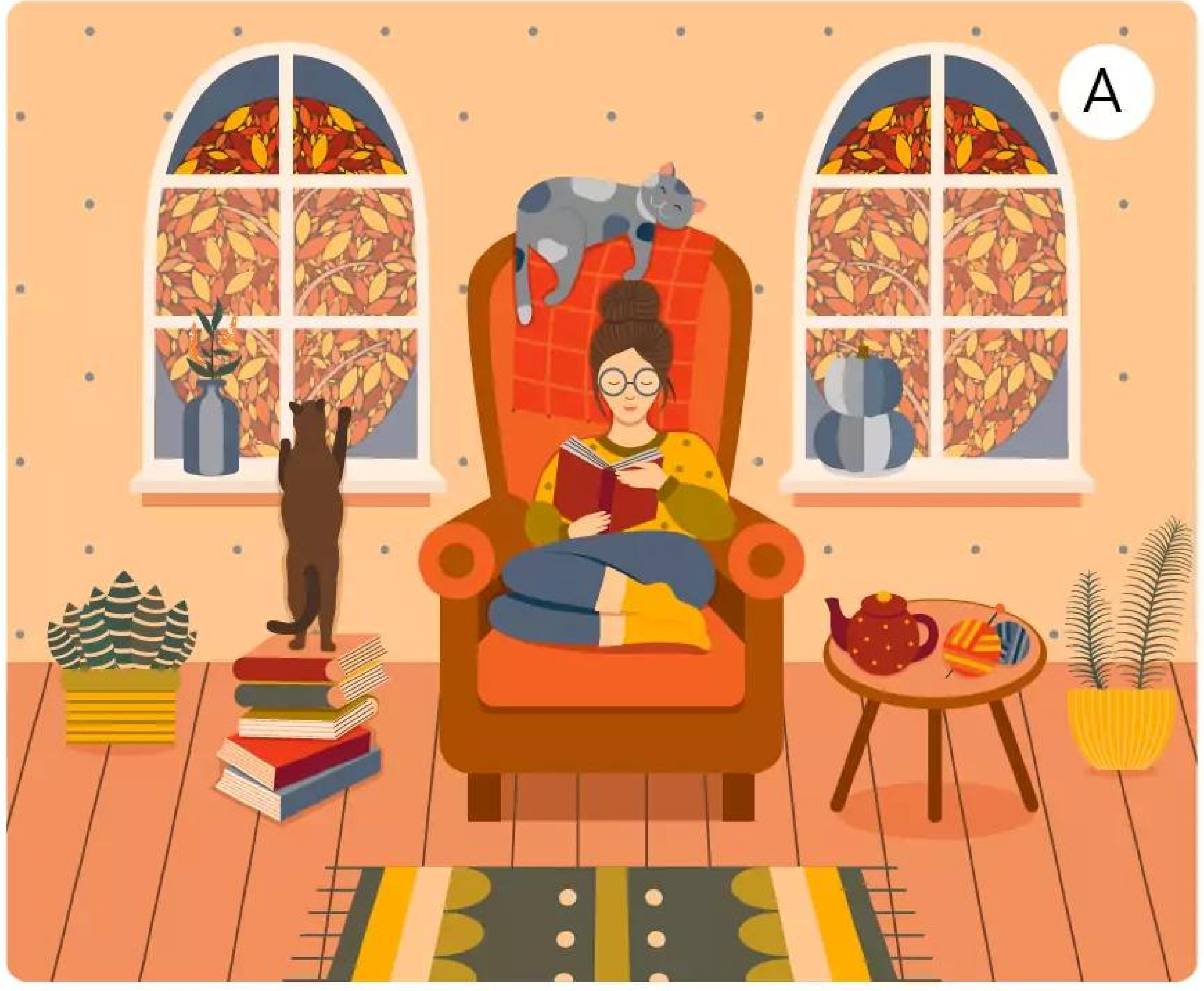
V	S	E	K	W	A	F	Y	U	G	X	I	I	T	C
T	T	N	A	R	G	N	H	O	J	P	D	A	H	M
R	I	H	I	S	U	C	C	D	U	T	S	I	O	T
E	E	E	O	N	E	I	M	W	R	S	T	E	M	H
A	I	D	E	M	L	Y	O	N	A	Y	V	U	A	G
S	K	E	W	O	A	L	E	S	C	I	D	L	S	I
O	L	I	H	O	B	S	S	K	S	R	O	E	B	R
N	A	T	N	I	P	I	P	O	T	N	T	B	A	W
T	A	D	E	G	N	N	L	E	D	R	N	E	T	N
C	O	E	A	A	J	P	U	O	R	R	E	R	E	H
E	I	L	T	L	X	A	N	G	T	C	G	B	S	O
M	F	I	P	E	A	E	M	C	D	N	Y	R	O	J
U	O	A	I	B	A	R	R	E	L	T	E	P	V	R
N	A	F	R	A	L	L	E	C	S	L	N	R	E	I
S	A	H	O	U	S	E	O	F	L	O	R	D	S	T

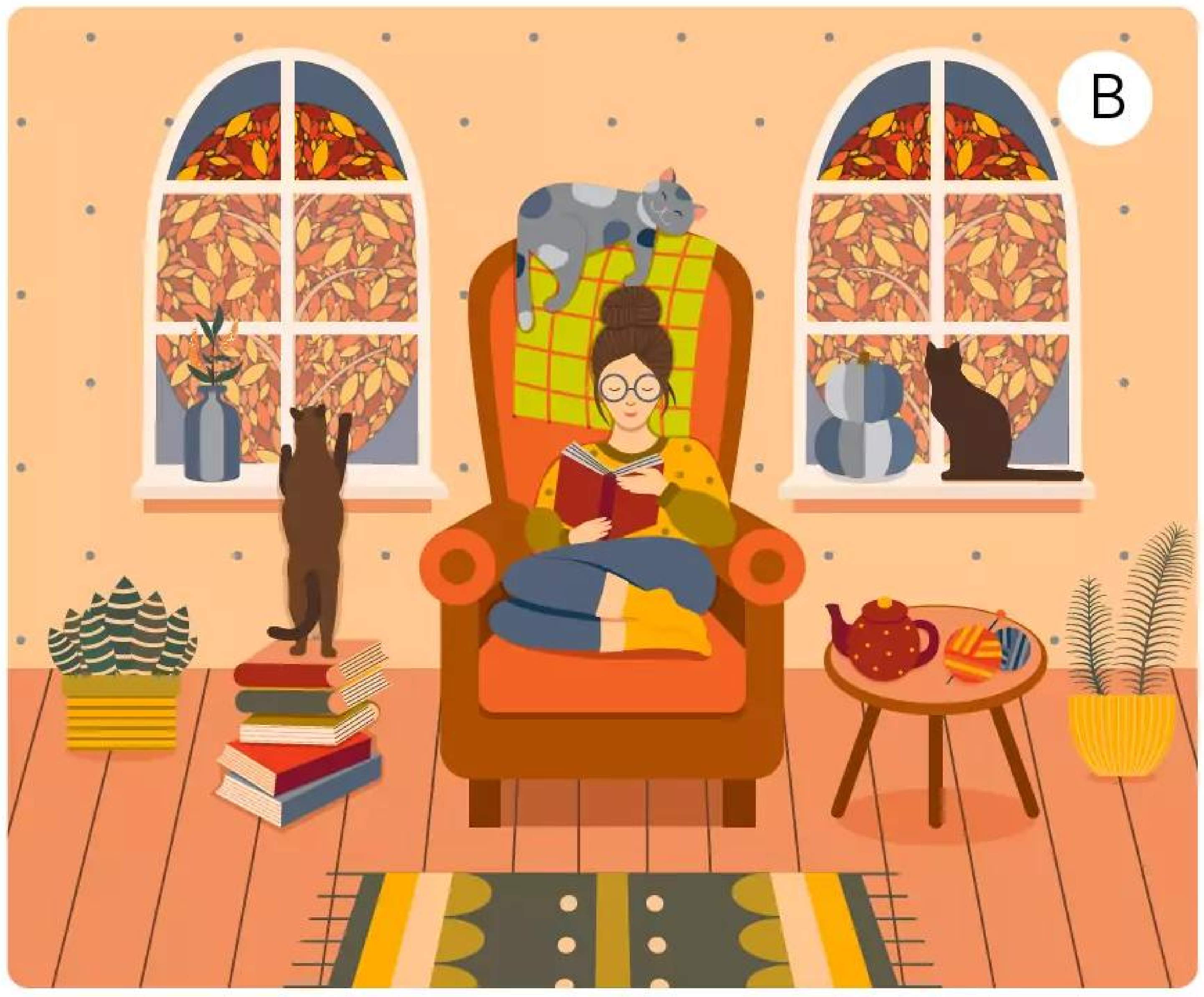
ASSASSINATION
BARREL
BLOW UP
CATHOLIC
CELLAR
EXPLOSIVE
FAILED
GUNPOWDER
GUY FAWKES
HOUSE OF LORDS
JOHN GRANT
JOHN WRIGHT
KING JAMES
LONDON
PLOT
REBEL
ROBERT KEYES
THOMAS BATES
THOMAS PERCY
TREASON

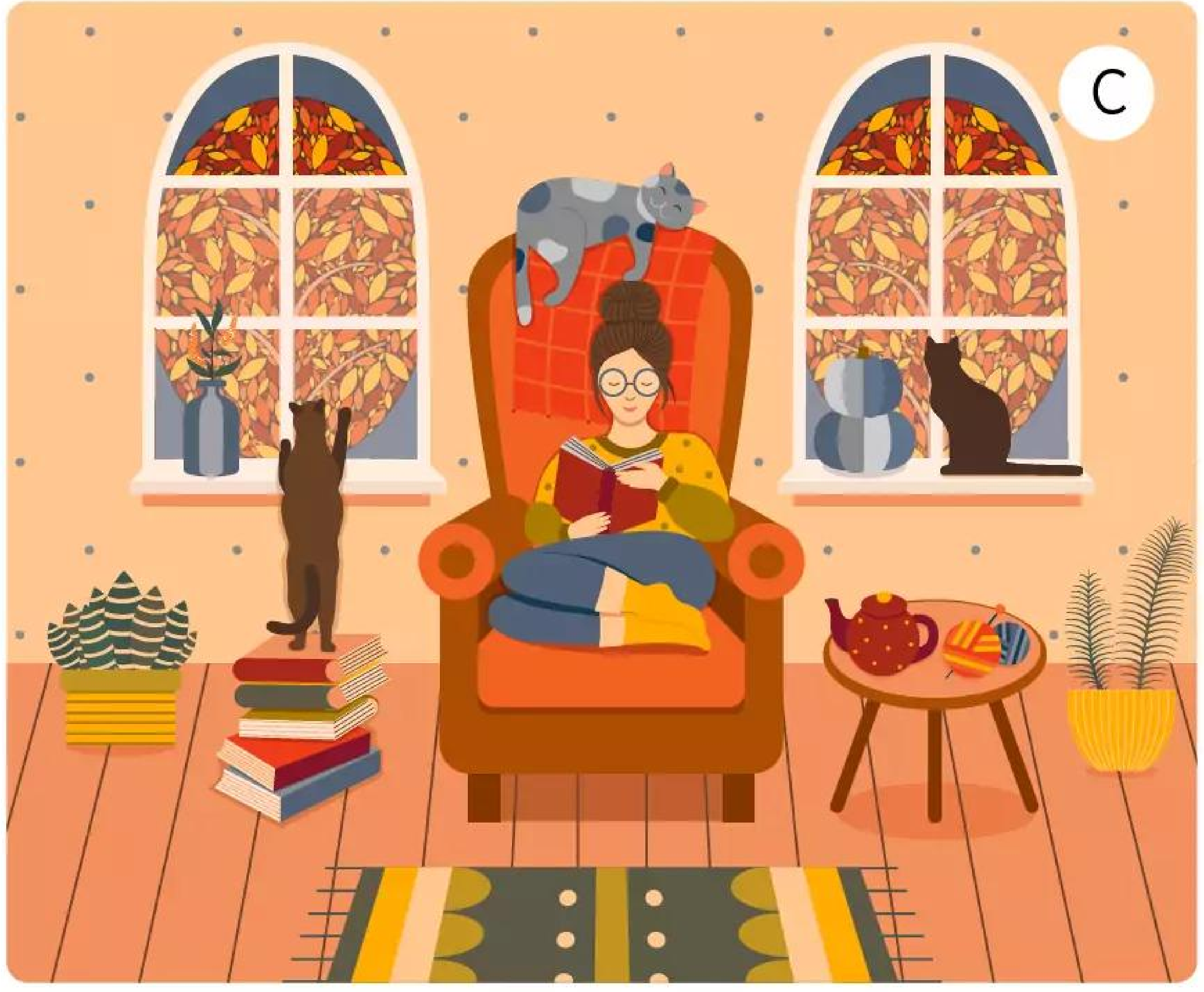
WIN
£50

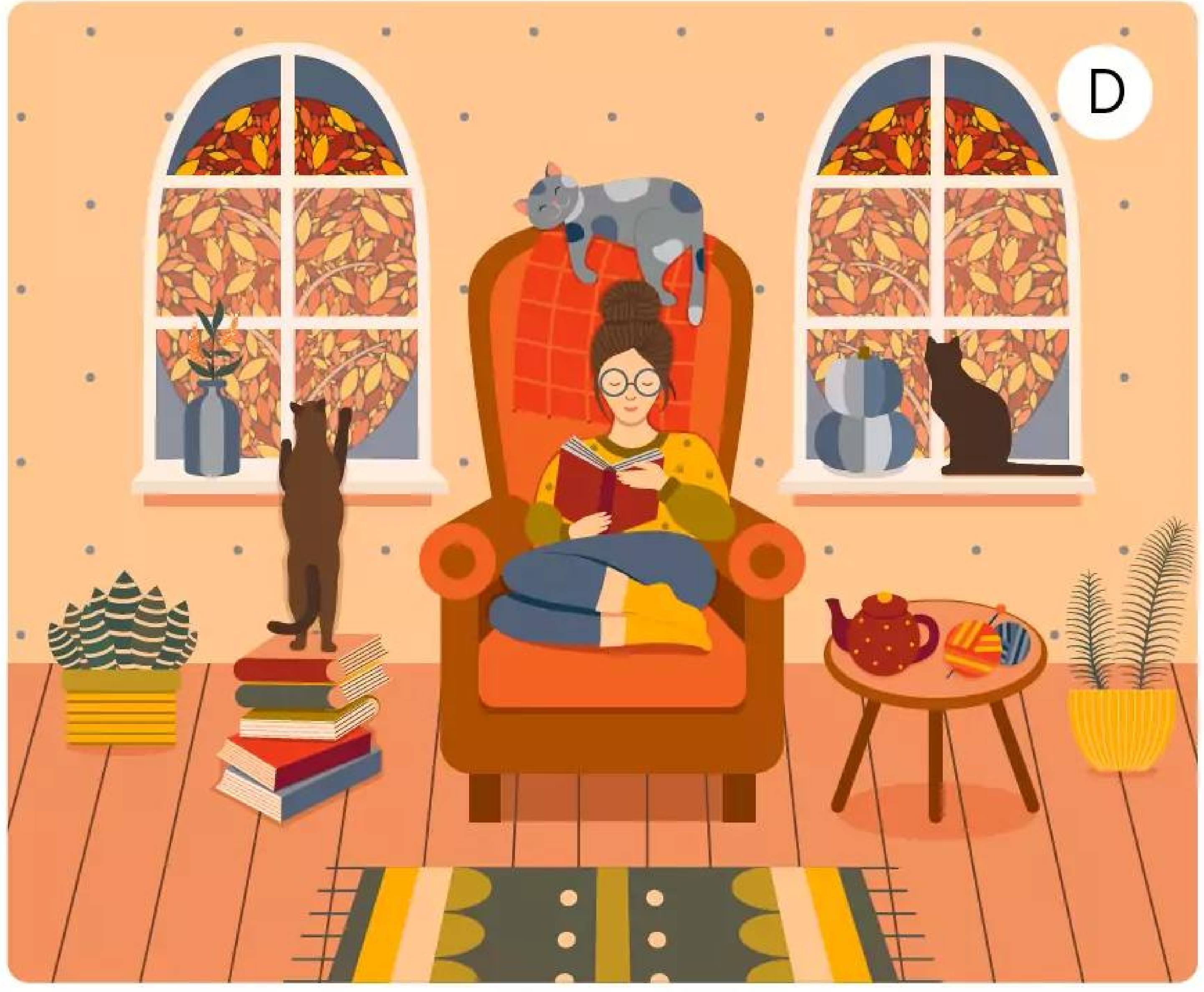
SPOT THE MATCHING PAIR

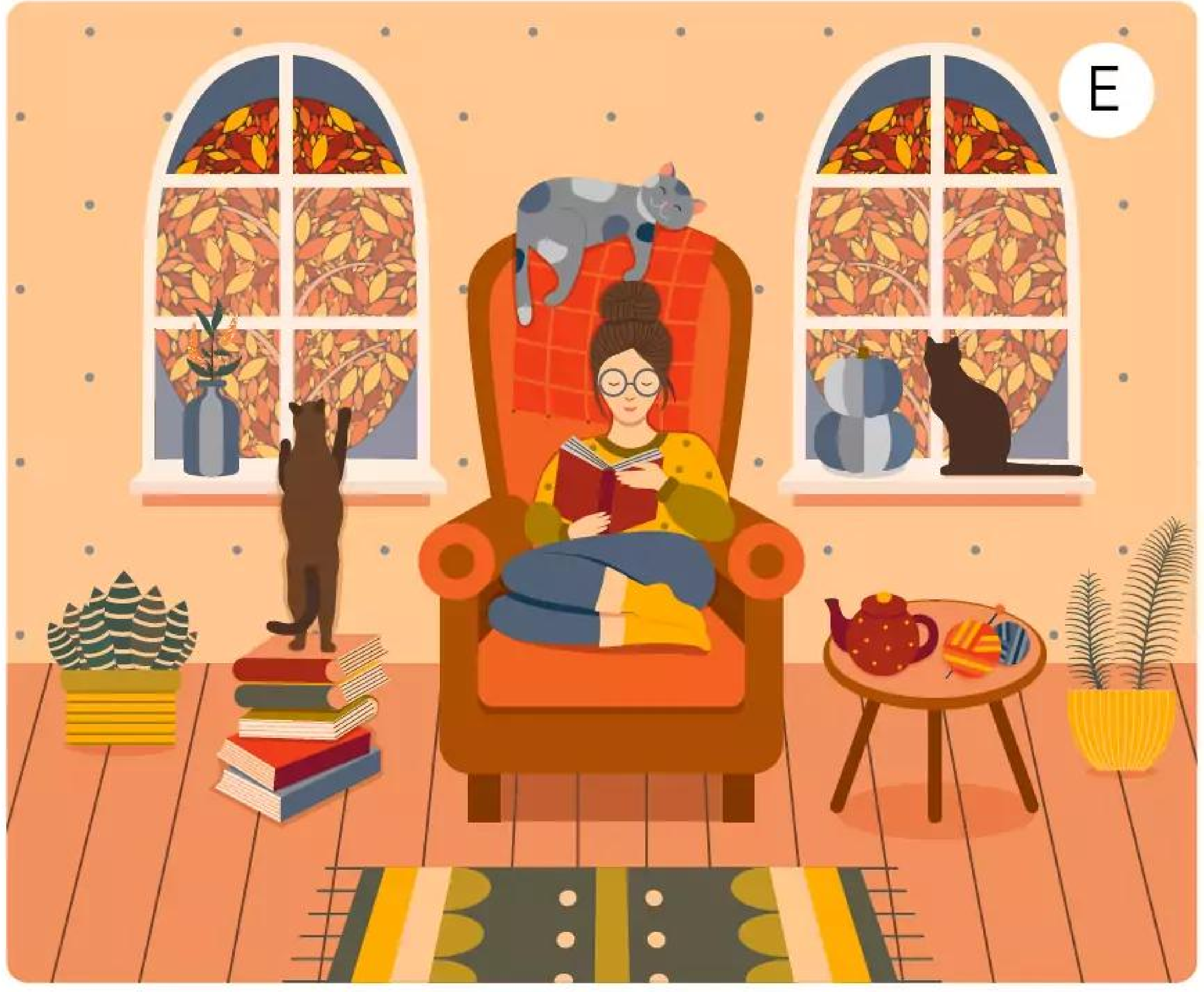
JUST TWO OF THESE PICTURES ARE EXACTLY THE SAME, BUT CAN YOU FIND WHICH ONES THEY ARE? Once you're sure of your choice, **fill in the corresponding letters on the form on page 135 and you could be in with a chance of winning £50.**

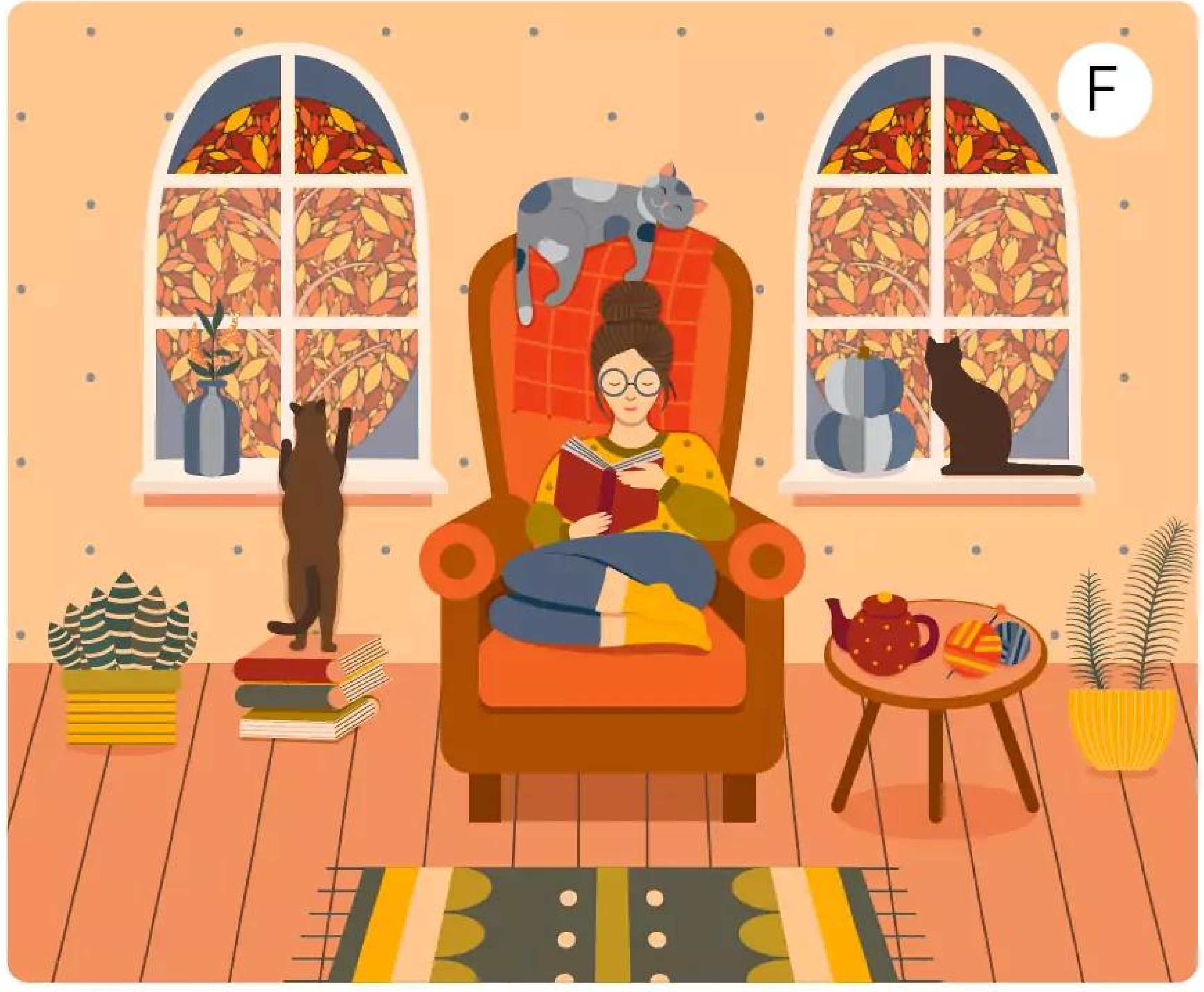












IMAGES ISTOCK, ALAMY

PATHFINDER

WIN
£50

BEGINNING WITH THE HIGHLIGHTED LETTER, FOLLOW A CONTINUOUS PATH TO FIND ALL BUT ONE OF THE LISTED COLOURS. The trail passes through each and every letter once and may twist up, down or sideways, but never diagonally. Which word from the list does not appear in the trail?

Enter it on page 135 for a chance to win £50.

M	I	L	V	E	R	A	Z	E	L
U	S	Z	A	P	E	H	D	E	Y
S	T	A	T	O	M	E	L	L	L
R	A	I	L	D	L	R	A	W	O
D	G	N	O	C	O	G	R	A	C
G	A	M	T	R	I	L	A	L	E
R	E	L	E	S	M	E	M	P	R
T	Y	O	I	O	R	M	N	B	U
U	U	O	V	N	E	I	O	L	P
R	Q	I	S	E	V	L	I	U	E

BLUE
CARAMEL
CRIMSON
EMERALD
GOLD
GREY
HAZEL
INDIGO
MAGNOLIA
MUSTARD
PURPLE
SILVER
TOPAZ
TURQUOISE
VERMILION
VIOLET
YELLOW

			3				9	5
9	1	6				2		8
		2	7		3		1	
5		9	6		1			
		1	4		9		5	
2	6	3				7		9
			8				4	6

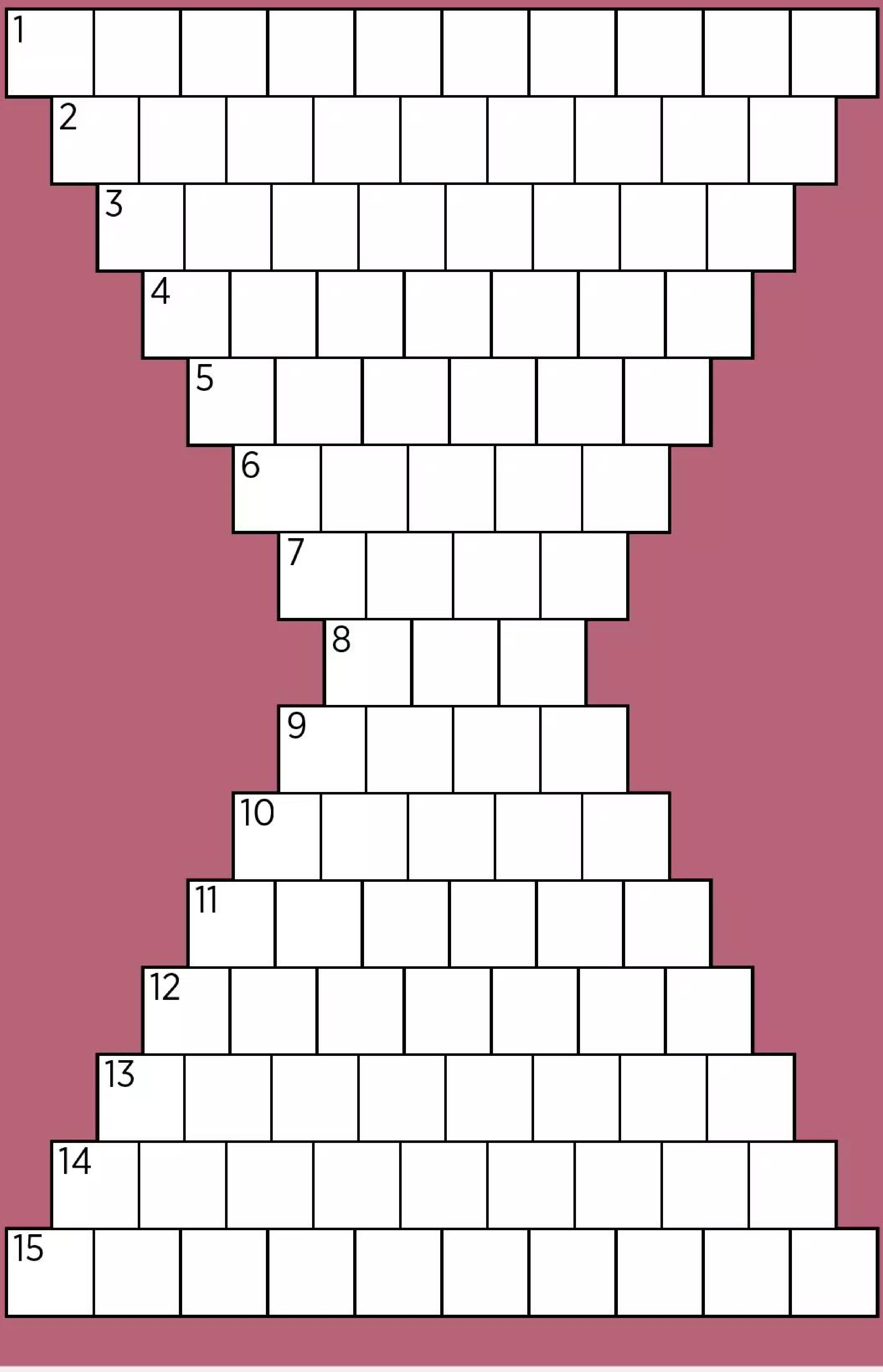
SUDOKU

PLACE THE DIGITS 1 TO 9 INCLUSIVE INTO THE BOXES, SO THAT EVERY HORIZONTAL ROW, EVERY VERTICAL COLUMN AND EACH SET OF NINE SMALLER SQUARES CONTAINS A DIFFERENT NUMBER.

BRICKWORK

EACH ANSWER EXCEPT THE FIRST USES ALL THE LETTERS IN THE PREVIOUS ANSWER – usually in a different order – plus or minus one letter.

1 Darting about (10)
2 Crying out with fear (9)
3 Applying by spreading (8)
4 Riddles (7)
5 Mental pictures (6)
6 Cards, Ludo and tennis etc (5)
7 Jewels (4)
8 One of the March sisters in *Little Women* (3)
9 Microbe (4)
10 Ingrained dirt (5)
11 Desert illusion (6)
12 Style of jazz piano music (7)
13 Person who moves abroad to live (8)
14 Interfering (9)
15 Seeping through (10)



WORDBUILDER

USING THE NINE LETTERS PROVIDED CAN YOU ANSWER THESE CLUES? Every answer must include the highlighted letter N. Which word uses all nine letters?

E	L	G
T	N	A
I	R	F

5 LETTERS
Acquire information
Colossus
Conclude from evidence
Heavenly being
Lay to rest

6 LETTERS
Classification
Have as a consequence
Intertwined mess
Keep in mind
Managing, coping

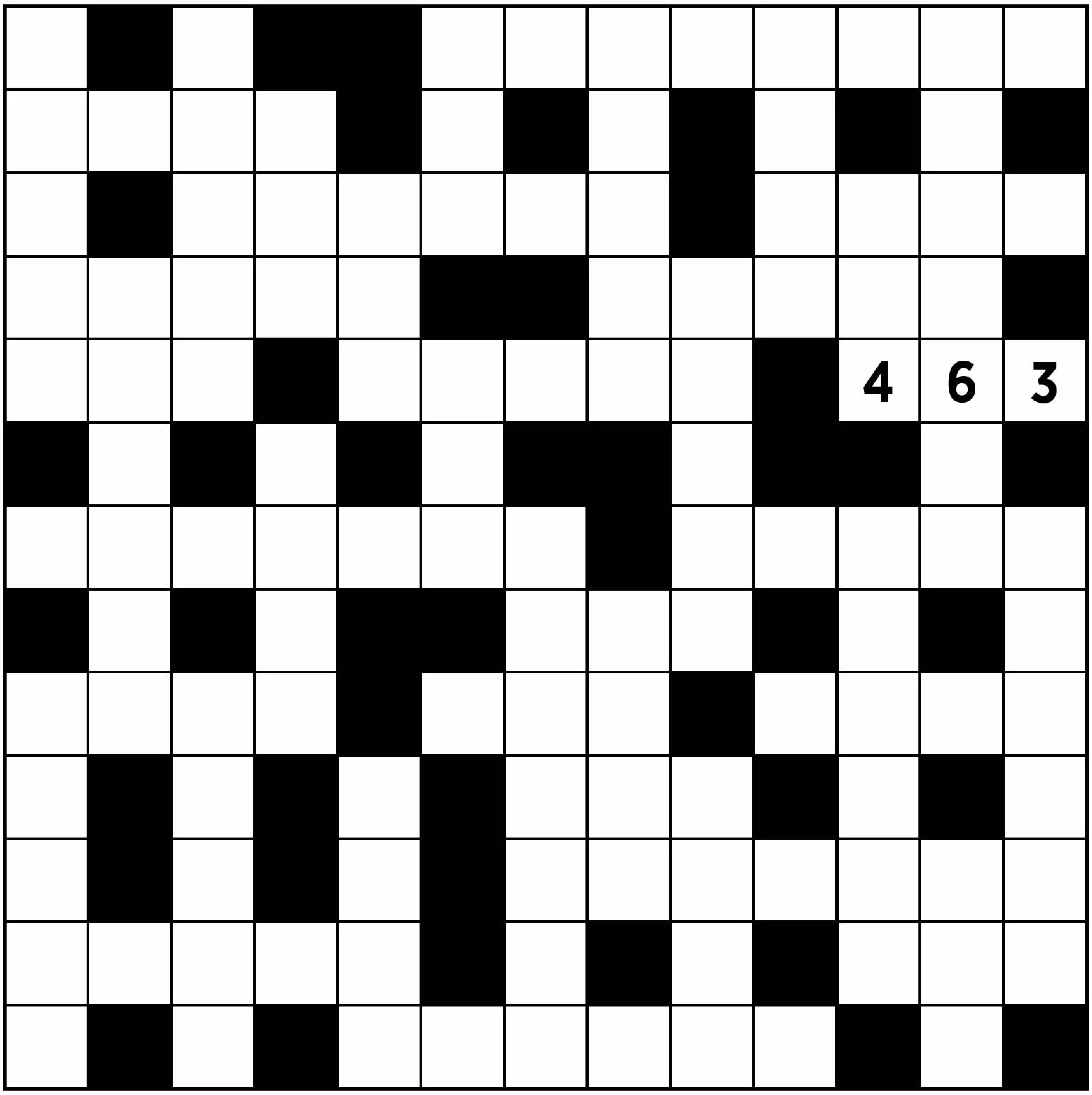
7 LETTERS
Blow up (a balloon)
Curl of hair
Dependent (on)
Hard volcanic rock
Widening (out)

8 LETTERS
Essential (part)
Giving an account of
Modifying (tailoring)
Three-sided figure
Tipping off

WHICH WORD USES ALL NINE LETTERS?

NUMBERFIT

FIT ALL THE LISTED NUMBERS INTO THE GRID.



3 DIGITS

161
206
314
423
~~463~~
627
671
786
818
880
901
904

4 DIGITS

1763
2013
2489
2665
5960
6258
8348
9057
9058

5 DIGITS

13708
28811
35457
46710
57954
64715
69876
74500
81581
84118
85851

6 DIGITS

473423
483474
882108
901534
910123

7 DIGITS

5572287
6472838
8681561
9168635

8 DIGITS

98209798

CODEWORD

WIN
£50

WORK OUT WHICH LETTER EACH NUMBER REPRESENTS AND THEN TRANSFER THE CORRECT LETTERS INTO THE PANEL BELOW TO SPELL OUT THE PRIZE ANSWER.

Enter it on page 135 for a chance to win £50.

■	2	■	10	■	■	2	11	12	15	20	18
3	20	9	20	12	2	■	20	■	7	■	12
■	26	■	26	■	17	20	18	7	23	20	26
14	8	5	5	1	22	■	2	■	23	■	25
■	11	■	22	■	8	16	20	10	8	25	20
11	8	2	11	22	18	■	■	8	■	■	14
18	■	■	11	■	■	22	26	2	7	21	26
22	6	12	7	26	20	24	■	12	■	8	■
4	■	2	■	8	■	10 C	1 L	8 A	13	13	9
4	26	12	10	4	1	22	■	1	■	19	■
22	■	8	■	22	■	1	20	1	1	20	15
25	22	1	12	25	22	■	■	9	■	1	■

~~A~~ B ~~C~~ D E F G H I J K ~~L~~ M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 L	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 A	9	10 C	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

7	21	26	7	11	7	20	26

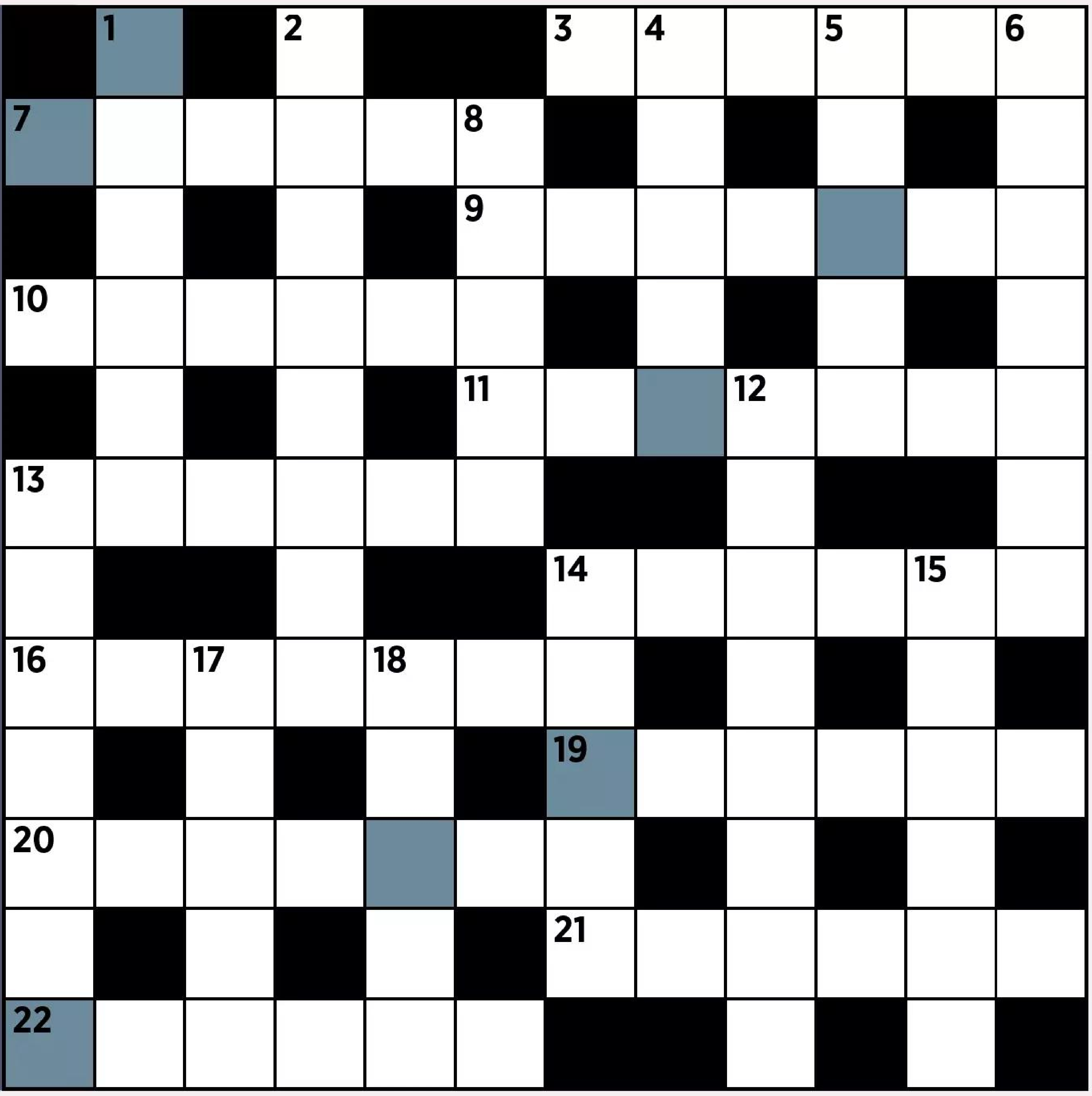
Do you know?

Oscar-winning British actress Tilda Swinton celebrates her 65th birthday this month. She's the star of many films including *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *Doctor Strange* and *We Need To Talk About Kevin*. What is her full name?

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

WIN
£75

FOR A CHANCE TO WIN £75, try to complete our cryptic crossword. Once you've filled it in, arrange the highlighted letters from the grid to spell out a keyword. **The clue this month is artillery unit's energy supply (7).** Now enter it on page 135.



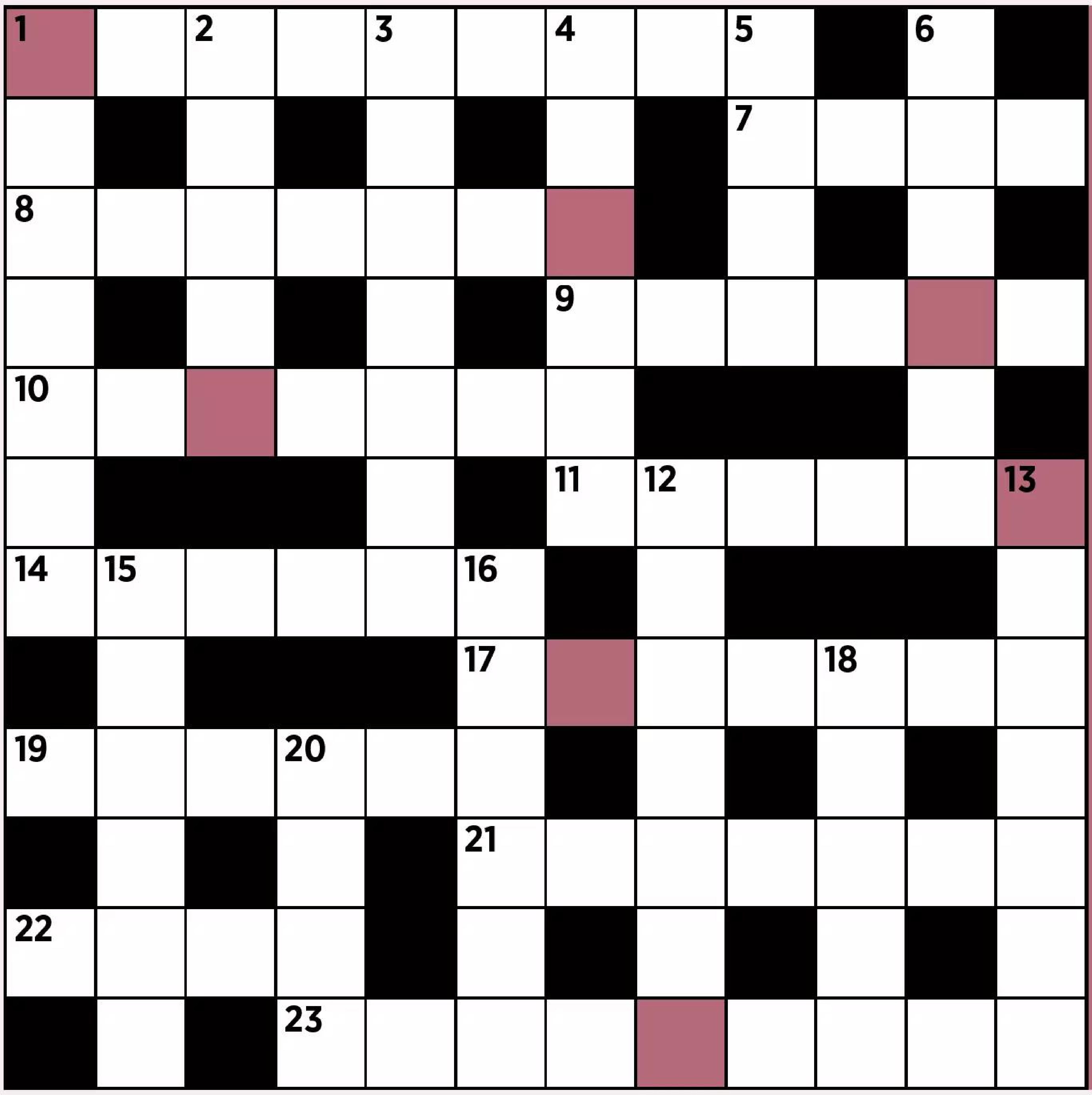
ACROSS

3 Hymns in addition to charity donations (6)
7 Loud deliveries in ship's cabins (6)
9 What's blown by ref in game against the French (7)
10 A meal I prepare for woman (6)
11 Radio man, Romanic, perhaps (7)
13 Synchronised part of foot (6)
14 Friend to lap up by enclosure (3,3)
16 Sound of cow entering vessel – scram! (7)
19 Votes to accept post ad, perhaps (6)
20 Turning device either way (7)
21 Wail in morning during fasting period (6)
22 Go wrong with chore (6)

DOWN

1 Wardens find love in Middle Eastern country (6)
2 It's back for hire to heel (8)
4 Awful risk involving English winter sportsperson (5)
5 Many on to game of chance (5)
6 Dish unusually served to police constable (7)
8 Moved through water quietly, finding marsh (5)
12 Clearly a starter to study before battle (8)
13 Trendy poetry or the opposite (7)
14 Pawn nobleman's precious stone (5)
15 Be there at a race before the finish (6)
17 Car has little time to pass through open land (5)
18 Frequently tenderise, though not initially (5)

QUICK CROSSWORD



FOR A CHANCE TO WIN £75 complete the crossword and arrange the highlighted letters from the grid to spell out a keyword. **The clue this month is small wooden firelighters (7).** Now enter it on page 135.

WIN
£75

ACROSS

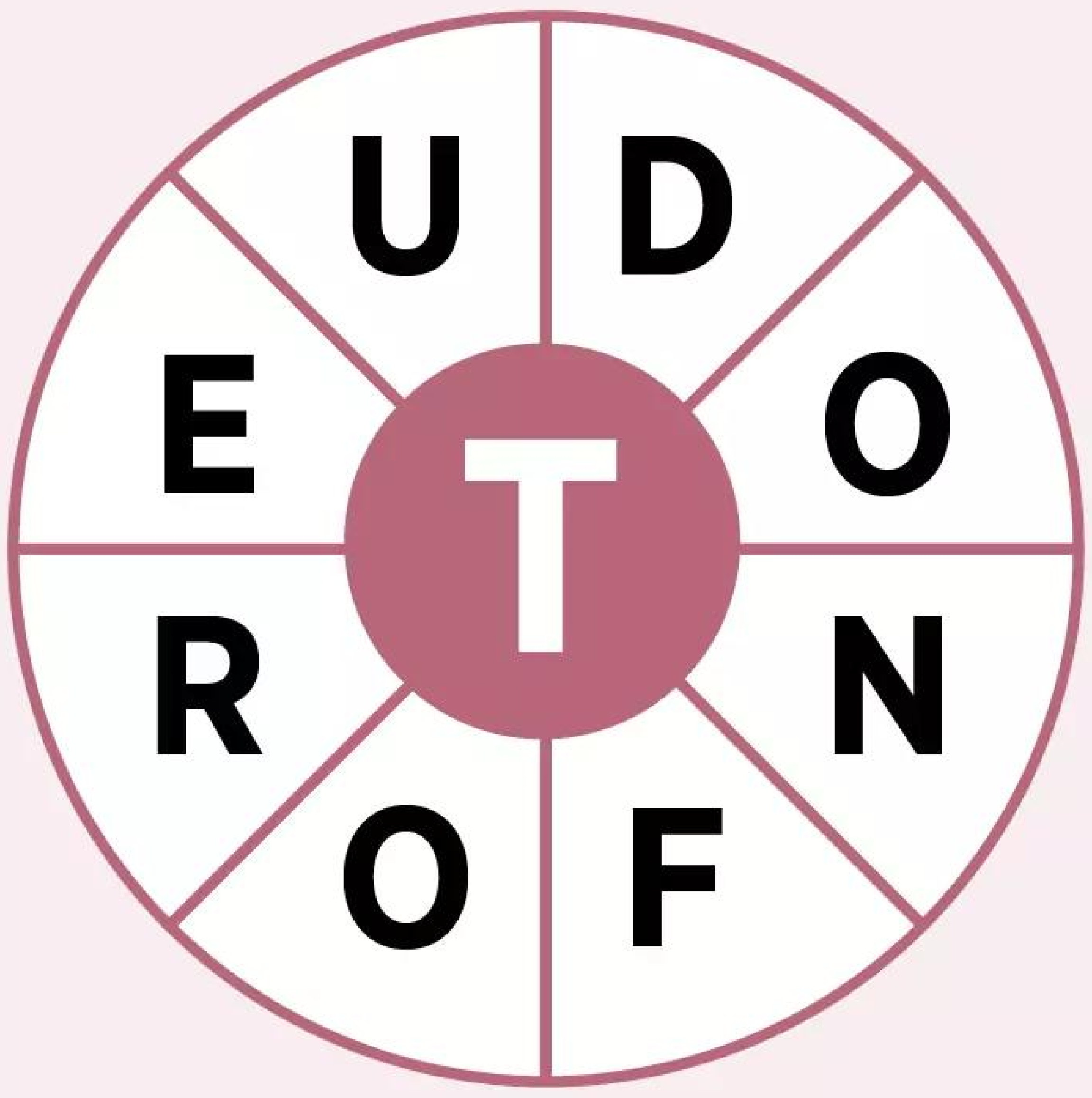
- **1** Provided with drapes (9)
- **7** Top of a car (4)
- **8** Concise and pithy saying (7)
- **9** Road diverting traffic around a town (6)
- **10** High flat area (7)
- **11** Distilled liquor (6)
- **14** Alcove or adjournment (6)
- **17** French for ‘castle’ (7)
- **19** School jacket (6)
- **21** Went in (7)
- **22** Oven for pottery (4)
- **23** Disputed (9)

DOWN

- **1** Plant that grows up walls (7)
- **2** Indian yogurt condiment (5)
- **3** Unventilated and stuffy (7)
- **4** Variety of cloud (6)
- **5** Leak (water) slowly (4)
- **6** Dwarf tree from Japan (6)
- **12** Empty talk (7)
- **13** Fell heavily (7)
- **15** Choux pastry cake (6)
- **16** Broadcast on television (6)
- **18** Species of heron (5)
- **20** Bluish-white metal (4)

Quizzical

Black Friday, when retailers temporarily drop their prices and shoppers search for festive bargains, takes place on the fourth Friday in November. Originating in the US, what year did it first appear in the UK?



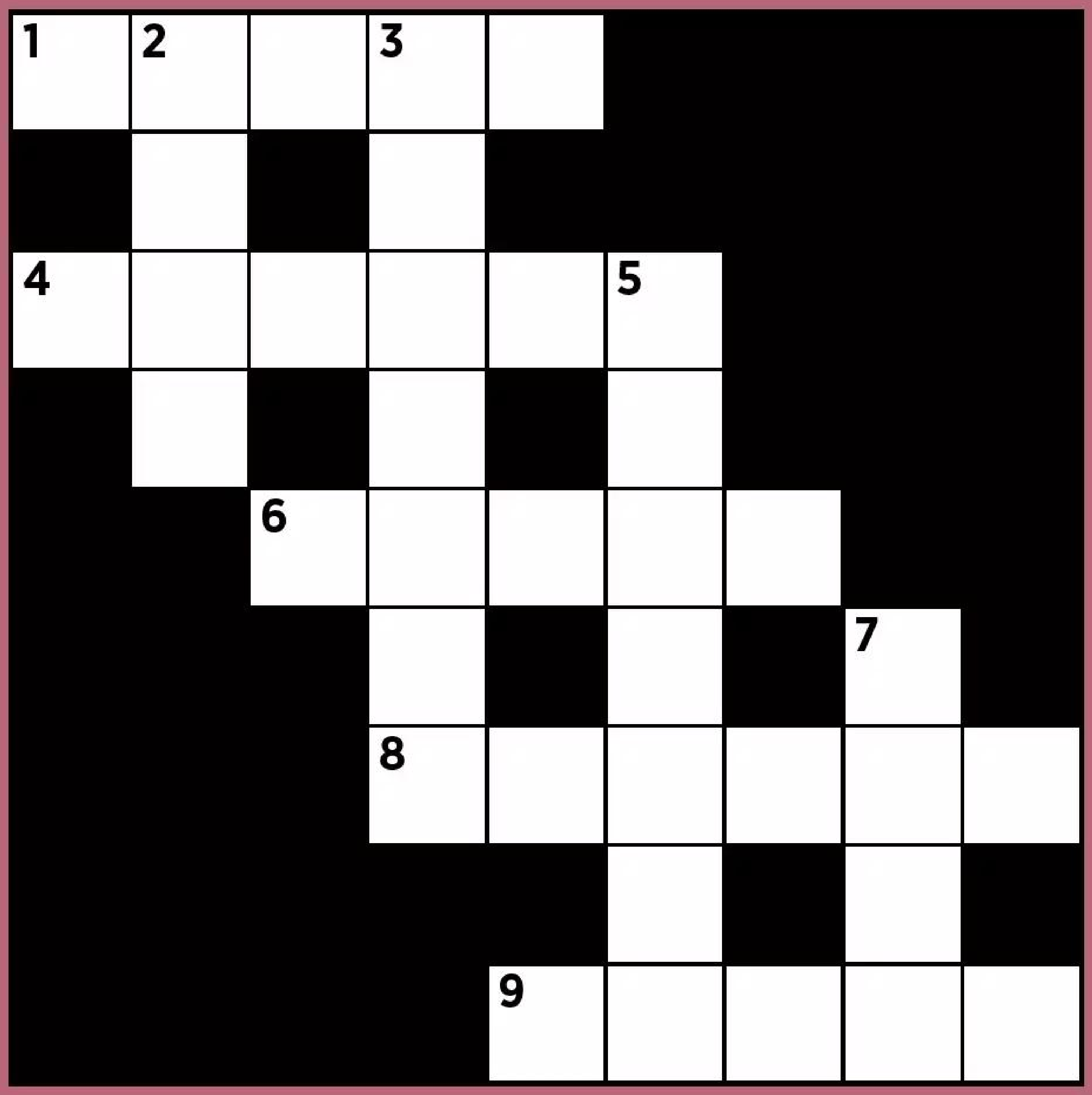
WORDWHEEL

WIN
£50

USING ONLY THE LETTERS IN THE WORDWHEEL, FIND AS MANY WORDS AS POSSIBLE – NONE OF WHICH MAY BE PLURALS, FOREIGN WORDS OR PROPER NOUNS. Words must be three letters or more, all must contain the central letter and the letters can only be used once in every word. There is at least one nine-letter word in the wheel. **Enter it on page 135 for a chance to win £50.**

Anagram crossword

THE ANSWERS ARE ANAGRAMS OF THE CLUES...



ACROSS

1 APPAL, **4** UNTIES, **6** LAMER, **8** TONNES, **9** ELBOW

DOWN

2 CANE, **3** RECASTS, **5** LICENSE, **7** MODE

Missing link

FIT TEN WORDS INTO THE GRID SO EACH ONE CONNECTS UP WITH THE WORDS ON EITHER SIDE EG WISHING – WELL – DONE. Read down the letters in the shaded squares to reveal a constellation.

ILL		▨			TUNNEL
SHELF	▨				SAVINGS
SUGAR	▨				SUM
LOST			▨		FOOD
CHAIN	▨				ORDER
SKIMMED		▨			TEETH
WASPS	▨				EGG
TOUCH		▨			CAMPS
STUDIO				▨	TYRE
EXTENSION		▨			ASTRAY

PIECEWORD

SOLVE THE CLUES TO FIT THE 15 PIECES INTO THEIR CORRECT POSITIONS IN THE EMPTY GRID which, when completed, will exhibit a symmetrical pattern.

ACROSS

1 Atlas drawing

2 Small amount or a Greek letter
- Sector, zone

4 Material found in knee joints, eg

6 Swimming competition
- Exploiter, manipulator

7 Musical drama

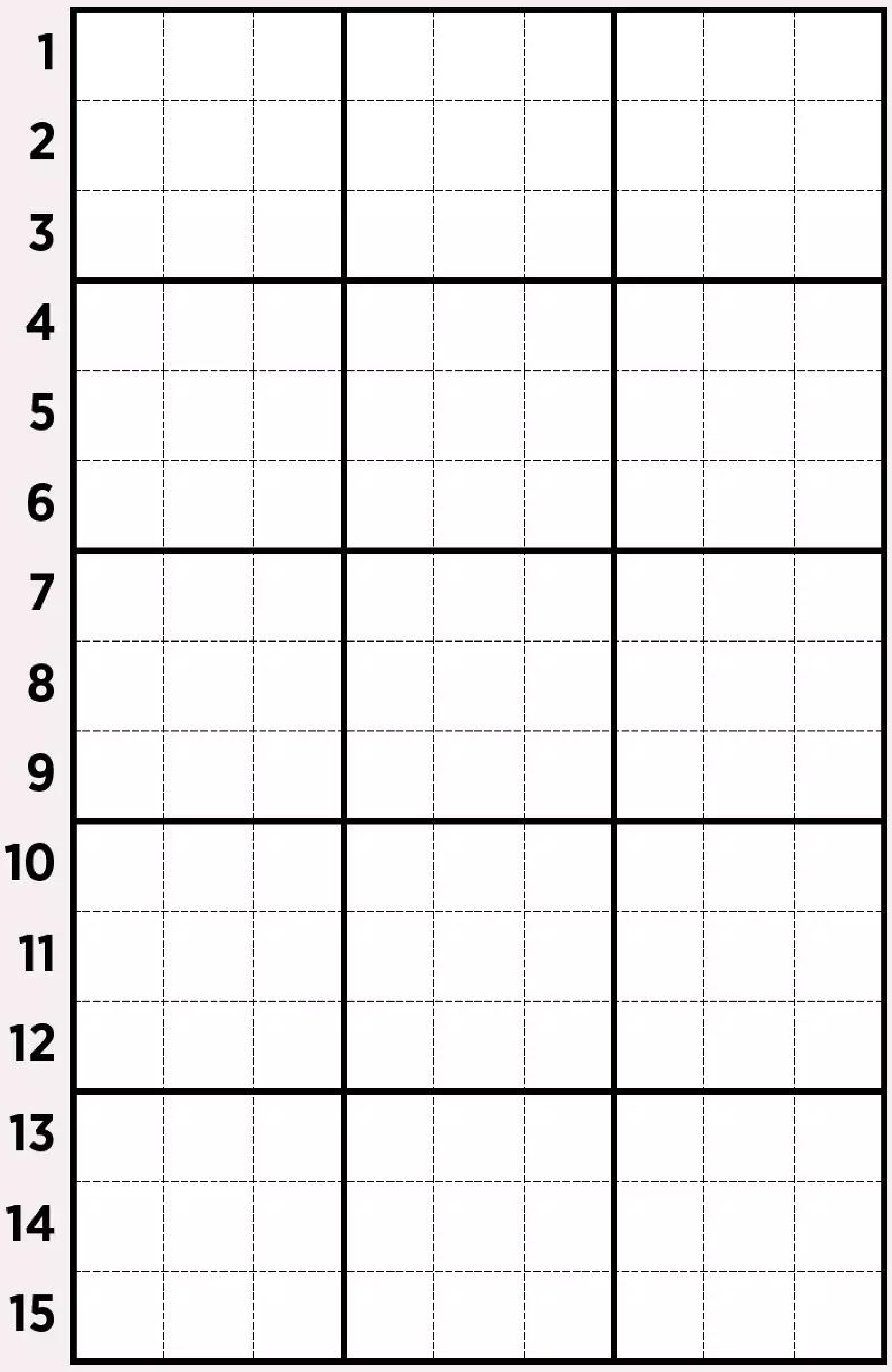
9 High-interest moneylending

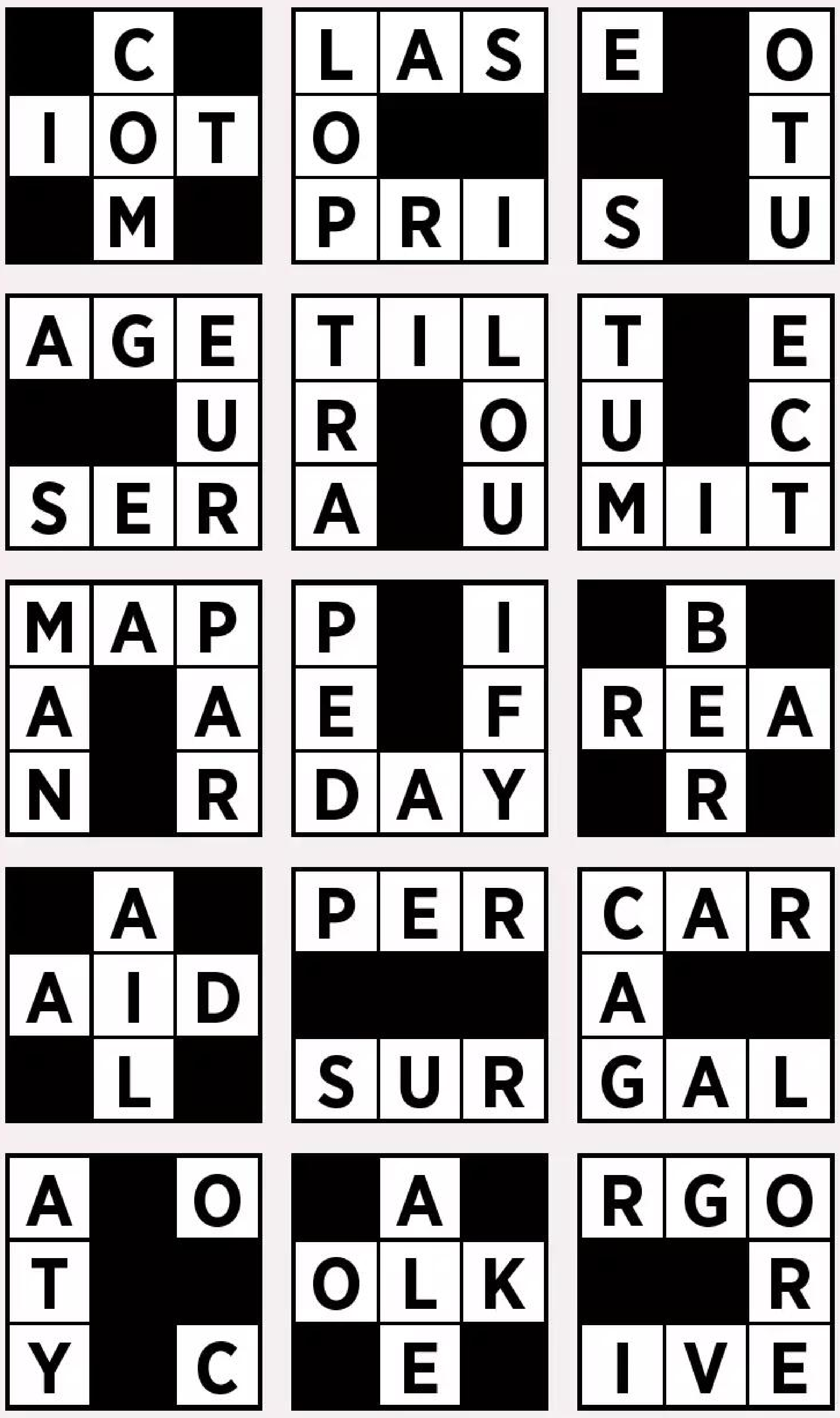
10 Concluding
- Hence

12 Rough, crude

14 Confidential assistant
- People in general

15 Period of 24 hours





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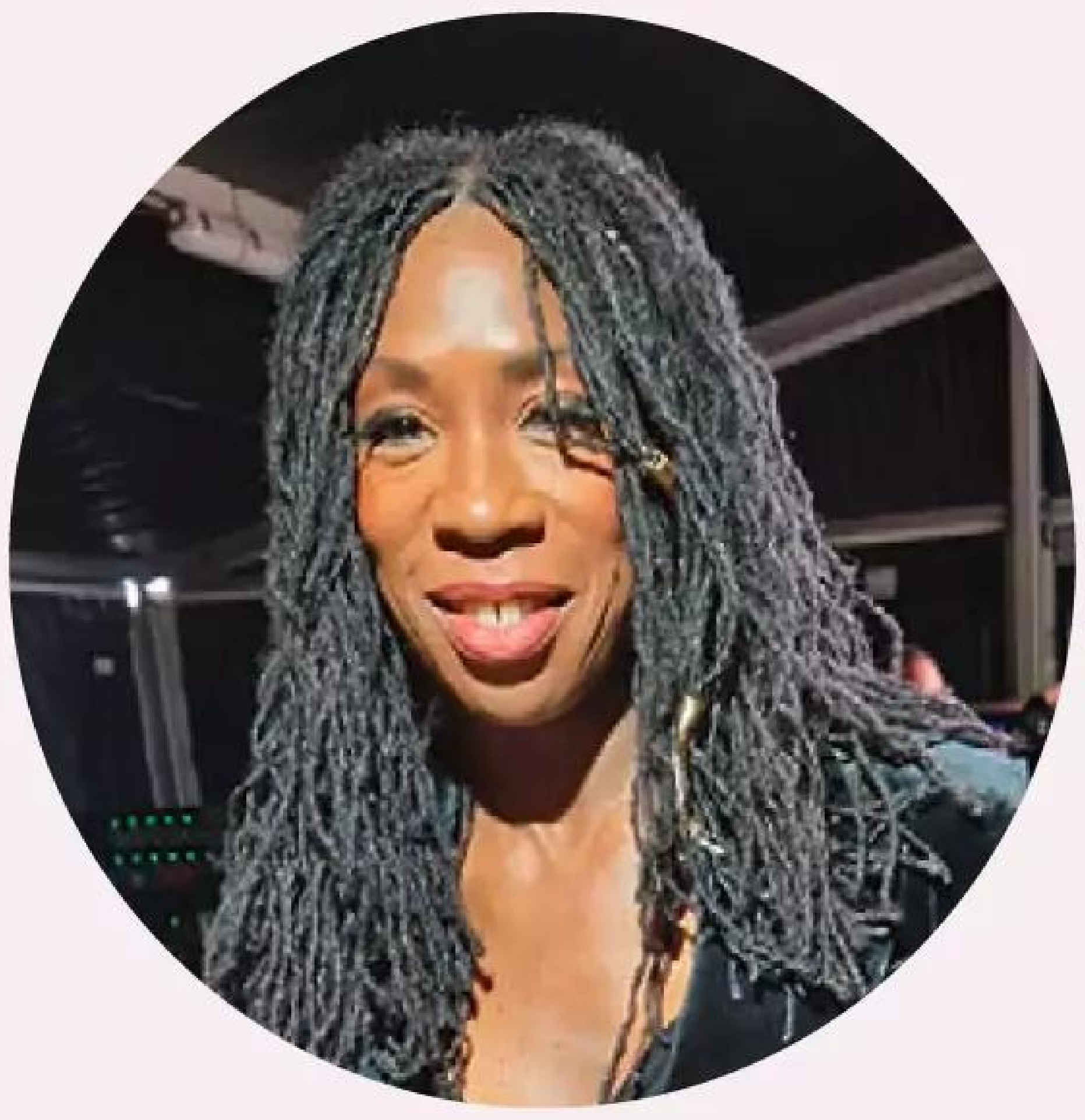

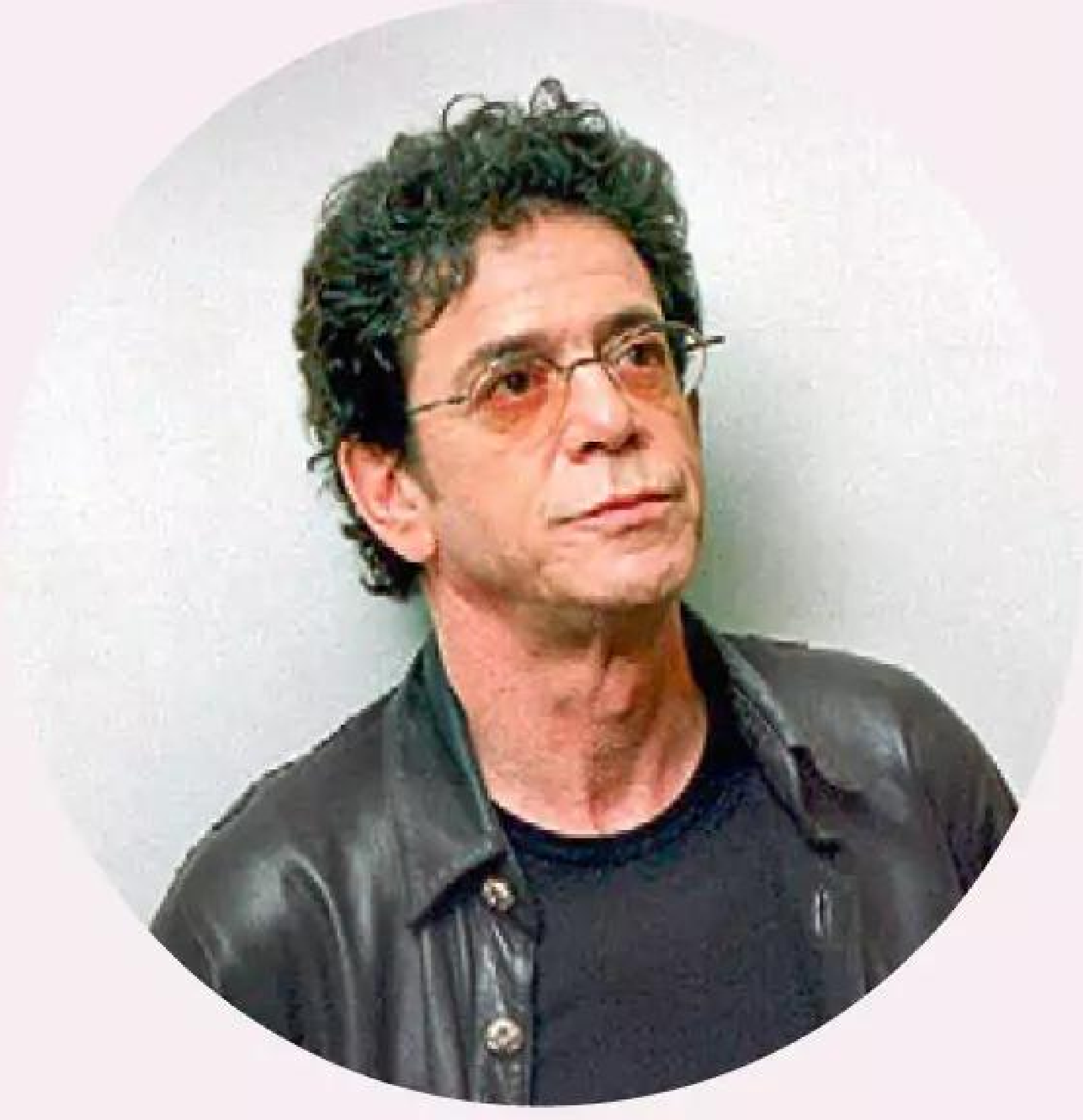

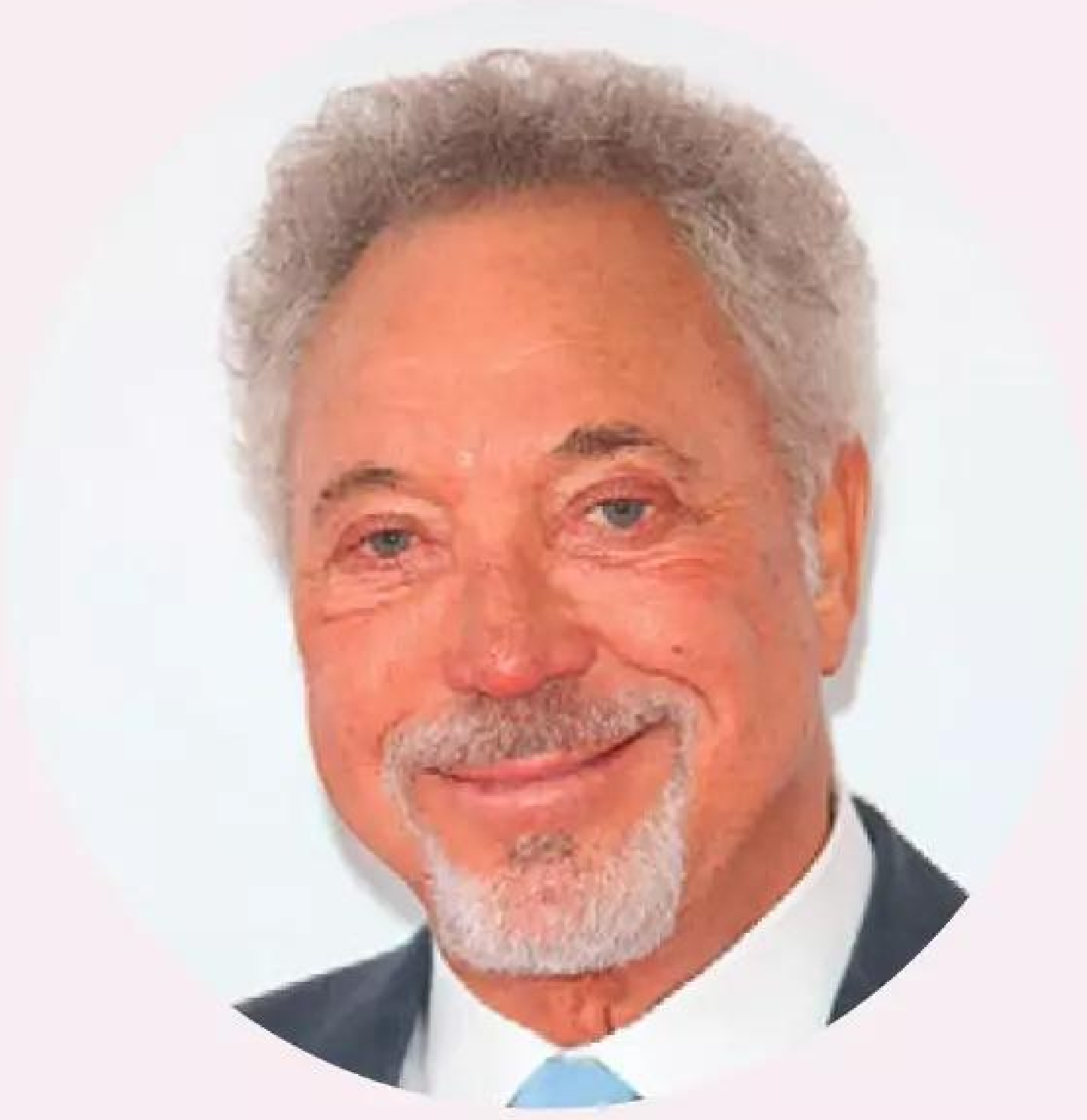

PICTURE THIS

Can you name the celebrities pictured above and what links them?

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CHECK NOW TO SEE IF YOU'VE WON!

Candis
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When you subscribe to Candis your membership number will be automatically entered into the Candis Lucky Numbers draw each month. With **150 prizes of £25 in high street vouchers** to be won as well as **two chances to win a £2,000** windfall, what are you waiting for?

EACH NUMBER HERE WINS A TOP PRIZE OF

£2,000

★ **01071076**

★ **01212772**

HOW TO CLAIM

Check your membership number against the Candis Lucky Numbers listed on this page and if they match, **CALL THE CLAIM LINE ON 0800 814 5400*** before 30 November 2025. See page 134 for Ts&Cs.

EACH NUMBER HERE WINS £25 IN HIGH STREET VOUCHERS

01045260
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01113440
01184247
01186773
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35404147
36465763
36474849
36586172
38425165
40445861
40535879
42617476
44555976
45485761
46486265
47485860
52587182
56657378
64666883
73767783

LOYAL MEMBERS CAN NOW

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IN OUR HIDDEN GEMS DRAW

Candis HIDDEN GEMS

If you've been a Candis subscriber for more than 12 months you will be awarded an extra entry for each additional year of your membership – up to five in total. These will be your original numbers plus up to four more with the additional Hidden Gems prefix letters added that indicate the length of your membership.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS...

- In the first year of your membership you have your **Candis Lucky Number**, which is the same as your membership number
- In the second year of your membership your **TOPAZ** Hidden Gems number will be your membership number with the **TP** prefix
- In your third year your **RUBY** number will have the **RB** prefix
- In your fourth year your **SAPPHIRE** number will have the **SP** prefix
- In your fifth year your **EMERALD** number will have the **EM** prefix

IF THIS IS YOUR HIDDEN GEMS NUMBER YOU HAVE WON UP TO £4,000

TP04187882

PLUS THERE ARE 100 RUNNER-UP PRIZES OF £50 IN HIGH STREET VOUCHERS

EACH NUMBER HERE **WINS £50** IN HIGH STREET VOUCHERS

TP01021168
TP01036081
TP01135179
TP01404552
TP04094168
TP05255159
TP05384968
TP07474973
TP08576673
TP09217576
TP09374668
TP13405256
TP14284350
TP15283452
TP16394869
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EM12173565
EM13304971
EM14596368
EM15192948
EM24556080
EM25364677
EM30356680
EM38465575
EM54575867

HOW TO CLAIM

Matched your Lucky Number on pages 120 or 121, or Hidden Gems number on page 122 or this page? **CALL THE CLAIM LINE ON 0800 814 5400** before 30 November 2025. See page 134 for Ts&Cs.

FOR FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS TURN TO PAGE 134 OR GO TO CANDIS.CO.UK/WIN/MEMBERDRAWS
*CALLS COST 5P A MINUTE PLUS YOUR PHONE COMPANY'S ACCESS CHARGE

ALL ABOUT YOU!

Lots to enjoy

Maureen Murray from Aberdeen will be 70 on 10 November and will celebrate with a special meal and a trip to Glasgow where they'll see *Hamilton The Musical*. She and her husband also celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on 20 September.

Let's celebrate!

A supporter of Candis for over two decades, Jan Clarke from Cheshire will celebrate her 70th birthday on 3 November. She and husband Mal are planning a city break plus fun with their family.

Food and festivities

A meal with family and a visit a Christmas market in early December is on the cards for Jane Jackson from Suffolk – who will be 65 on 3 November.

Rome-ing around

For her 60th birthday on 19 November, Katherine Ripley from Doncaster will be in Rome for a few days.

Success at 60

Sandra Hodson of Cumbria has had a "wonderful year" leading up to her 60th birthday on 24 November – she is mayor of her town, has completed her third BLESMA Challenge, and was nominated for Cumbria Woman of the Year.

Cruising for a birthday

On 23 November, John Northover from Stockport will be 80 and plans to celebrate with family – and hopefully a cruise! Enjoy.

A diamond (I) do

Kathleen Griffiths and her husband John from Glasgow celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary (60 years) this year. To celebrate, they had a 'bit of a do' with family and friends. Congratulations.

Busy birthday

To celebrate her birthday on 12 November, Susan Netherton from Cornwall is going for lunch with her husband and friends, then will see her daughters and six grandchildren in the evening, before a trip to Bath.

Family fun

Anne Currell from Northern Ireland celebrates her 65th birthday on 30 November with son Ashley, daughter Lisa, and four grandchildren. Next year she will also travel to New Zealand to see son, Colin, with a stop in Thailand to see daughter, Laura.

Surprise, surprise!

Dawn Horn from Lancashire is going on holiday in celebration of her 70th birthday on 28 November – though the plans remain a mystery to her! Have a fab time.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Happy birthday to these celebrities who share our readers' birthday month

SAVVY AT 70

Whoopi Goldberg
Actor, comedian and author, 13 November

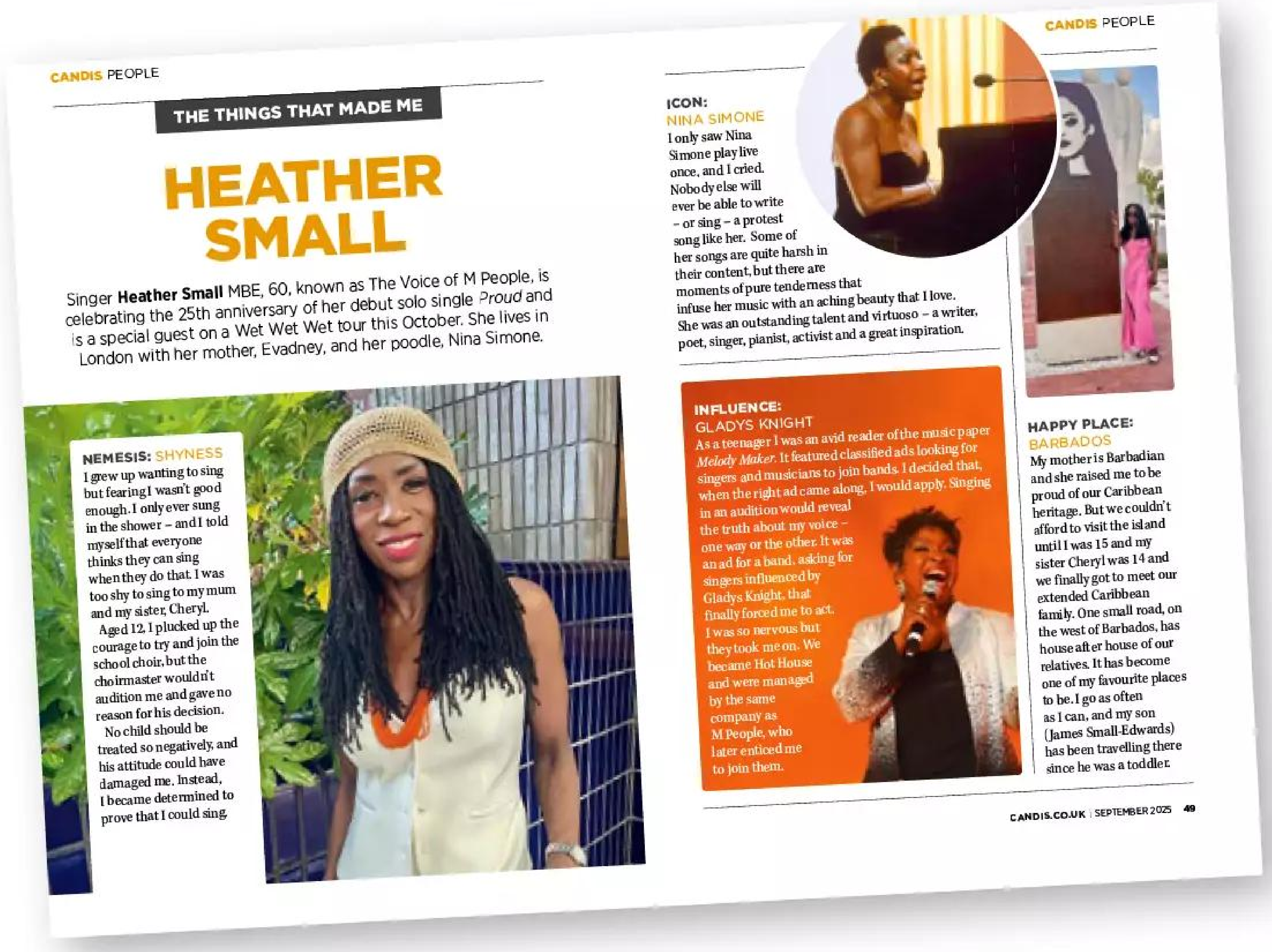
FUN AT 50

Ant McPartlin
TV presenter, 18 November

STAR AT 60

Ben Stiller
Actor, writer and director, 30 November

YOUR LETTERS



CANDIS PEOPLE

THE THINGS THAT MADE ME

HEATHER SMALL

Singer **Heather Small** MBE, 60, known as The Voice of M People, is celebrating the 25th anniversary of her debut solo single *Proud* and is a special guest on a Wet Wet Wet tour this October. She lives in London with her mother, Evadney, and her poodle, Nina Simone.

NEMESIS: SHYNESS

I grew up wanting to sing but fearing I wasn't good enough. I only ever sung in the shower – and I told myself that everyone thinks they can sing when they do that. I was too shy to sing to my mum and my sister, Cheryl.

Aged 12, I plucked up the courage to try and join the school choir, but the choirmaster wouldn't audition me and gave no reason for his decision.

No child should be treated so negatively, and his attitude could have damaged me. Instead, I became determined to prove that I could sing.

ICON: NINA SIMONE

I only saw Nina Simone play live once, and I cried. Nobody else will ever be able to write – or sing – a protest song like her. Some of her songs are quite harsh in their content, but there are moments of pure tenderness that infuse her music with an aching beauty that I love. She was an outstanding talent and virtuoso – a writer, poet, singer, pianist, activist and a great inspiration.

INFLUENCE: GLADYS KNIGHT

As a teenager I was an avid reader of the music paper *Melody Maker*. It featured classified ads looking for singers and musicians to join bands. I decided that, when the right ad came along, I would apply. Singing in an audition would reveal the truth about my voice – one way or the other. It was an ad for a band, asking for singers influenced by Gladys Knight, that finally forced me to act. I was so nervous but they took me on. We became Hot House and were managed by the same company as M People, who later enticed me to join them.

HAPPY PLACE: BARBADOS

My mother is Barbadian and she raised me to be proud of our Caribbean heritage. But we couldn't afford to visit the island until I was 15 and my sister Cheryl was 14 and we finally got to meet our extended Caribbean family. One small road, on the west of Barbados, has house after house of our relatives. It has become one of my favourite places to be. I go as often as I can, and my son (James Small-Edwards) has been travelling there since he was a toddler.

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Big, proud fan

I was delighted to find that *The Things That Made Me* feature in September's issue was about Heather Small, as I have been a big fan of M People – and her – since the start. In fact, when *Moving On Up* first came out, I played it on repeat constantly – you can imagine how thrilled my husband was! He's a Wet Wet Wet fan, so we were both devastated to have not been able to get tickets to the UK tour in October, with Heather as their special guest, as that's one concert we would've attended together!

As a massive *Strictly* fan, I've also seen every series and personally believe she should've placed higher in her season – though I may be a little biased.

When I read her feature in Candis, I discovered I have things in common with my idol. For example, I too dealt with shyness growing up, and Barbados is one of my favourite holiday destinations – my husband and I even plan to take another trip there in the new year.

Thanks for another great article.

Margaret McTavish, Scotland

Siren in the silence

I read with interest the article *Under Pressure?* in September's issue. I think a lot of us don't give our blood pressure a thought until it's picked up at the doctors' surgery or hospital. My sister recently went for a cholesterol test, and her blood pressure (BP) was taken. The nurse urgently called in the GP, as her BP was so high. She had no idea, or symptoms. The doctor said, "That's why we call it the silent killer." My dad died of a heart attack aged 69, even though he thought he was healthy – and mum has angina, so we ought to have given it some thought. She is now on medication and we're so glad it was found. That's why I'm pleased about the article – if it makes even 'healthy people' think, then it's worth it. And you can buy a BP monitor online to keep an eye on it, like me.

Marie Evans, West Midlands

PHOTOS **ISTOCK, ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK**

READER RECOMMENDS

Your top tips!

SPRAY, YOUR WAY!

Cut up your used lemons, put them in a spray bottle that is filled around a third of the way with white vinegar, and add a teaspoon of salt and small squirt of washing up liquid. Then, top this up with water and you have a homemade disinfectant spray.

Ellen Mercer, Stockport

A PLAY WITH PAINT

I donate any unwanted tins of household paint to my local amateur dramatics society. They are gratefully received and used for painting backdrops and scenery for their shows.

Lucy Travell, Gloucester

COLOUR CODE YOUR KEYS

I'm sure many of us have several keys to manage, so to make it easier to identify the correct key, I paint each of mine with a different colour of nail polish, which is very durable.

Jon Black, Milton Keynes

SWEET BIRDS

Don't throw away glass pudding bowls – put bird seed in them and place around your garden or bird house, as they are the ideal size for small birds to stand on and eat. They're also easy to wash. **Katrina Pailing, Bristol**

GET IN TOUCH

There's £25 in HSV for any tips and letters featured. Want to see your birthday, anniversary or family celebration here? We'll do our best to include you, but please send in early to avoid disappointment. Email **sally.evans@newhallpublishing.com**

@candismagazine

Candis, Newhall Publishing Ltd,
New Hall Lane, Hoylake CH47 4BQ

ASK FLIC... ANYTHING

Problems, problems – all our lives can be beset by challenges and worries at some point. Our straight-talking agony aunt **Flic Everett** is always on hand to offer insightful advice and sensible solutions

"HAS HOLIDAY KILLED OUR FRIENDSHIP?"

Back in the summer, my husband and I shared a holiday cottage in Devon with a couple we've been close to for years. We've successfully holidayed as a foursome before. This year though, I felt some tensions – the other couple were snappy with each other and it wasn't much fun. Since then, we've hardly heard from them and they don't respond to messages. It hurts, as we were great friends and we've no idea what went wrong. Should we let them go?

"Friends being weird is always deeply upsetting, particularly when you've been close for years. If you look back, were there any clues to the underlying issue – little asides about marital problems or financial difficulties? Sometimes, we feel so comfortable with people, we stop 'seeing' them and just assume they haven't changed. But people do, and their needs and feelings change, too. It's possible one of them wanted to holiday alone, and felt resentful, or it may be that they're not getting along and your own happiness grated.

None of this is your fault, it was their responsibility to tell you what they needed, if anything. Most likely, it's nothing remotely related to you or your husband. Send one more message saying, "We're here if you want to chat, but no pressure." Beyond that, back off.

We often think we know what's happening in others' lives due to proximity and familiarity. But beneath the surface, a different narrative is playing out. Waiting is the only option – let them work it through. One day, it's likely you'll reunite. Being a good friend is sometimes about knowing when to step back."

"MY DAUGHTER IS SO UNGRATEFUL"

My youngest daughter became a mum this year. She and her partner live nearby and I've done everything I can to help, popping round when she needs a break, having the baby two days a week, and buying expensive baby equipment.

The trouble is, she doesn't seem to appreciate it – she criticises my ways with my grandson, expects me to drop everything on a whim, and I'm starting to feel she doesn't deserve all the effort I make. What can I do to help her see how rude she's being?

" I wonder what your daughter would say. Perhaps, "My Mum is really helpful, but I'm starting to feel as if everything is a transaction. I thought she'd be thrilled to spend time with the baby, but she expects lavish thanks for everything she ever does and it makes me feel guilty and resentful. Sometimes I don't like the way she handles my baby – I know she means well but I love him so much and I'm terrified something will go wrong if he's not with me."

If she's genuinely being rude, she's probably taking you for granted because she's exhausted and knows you'll still love her whatever happens. However much we love them, having a new baby is tough – we tend to lean on the people who love us, the ones we can trust to be there. There's not much bandwidth for endless gratitude.

I wonder if you still see your daughter as a child who needs to learn 'please' and 'thank you', rather than an adult you love, who is up against it? Having said that, actual rudeness is upsetting and demeaning. Next time she snaps, try saying, "I know you don't mean to be hurtful, but I feel a bit embarrassed and upset." Keep blame out of it ("Why must you be so rude?") and simply state how you feel, without making threats or returning her rudeness.

It's nice to be thanked, but ask yourself, do you want to buy things for, and spend time with your grandson? If so, carry on, because it brings you joy and it helps your daughter. If you don't enjoy it, renegotiate the hours you spend so you can appreciate time together without feeling resentful. She may expect you to drop everything 'on a whim', but you can say no, politely. Your daughter is not a child, she's a grown-up who needs help. Treat her like one. "

You can send your problems to Flic at the address given on page 127, or email flic@candis.co.uk

Flic will endeavour to send a personal reply to every letter she receives.

YOUR HOROSCOPE

From health matters and work to money and relationships, our resident astrologer, **Russell Grant**, reveals what could be in store for your star sign over the coming month

SIGN OF THE MONTH SCORPIO

24 OCT – 22 NOV

November is your month of reflection in readiness for new starts. The Full Moon on the 5th highlights your relationships – what supports you, what drains you. Let go of the latter without regrets. Mid-month, slow your thoughts and think before you speak to avoid misunderstandings. The 20th offers a fresh start, and by the end of November you will be putting any plans made into action.

December brings the start of an exciting new phase in your life. Remember that you have earned this next chapter. Step forward slowly but with intent.

It's never too late to realise your dreams and you will be setting some ambitious long-term goals at the start of 2026. You will even be accepting a challenge you would never normally have considered.

If you have had to set aside your personal wishes in recent years due to heavy responsibilities and difficult circumstances, now is the perfect time to pick up where you left off. Keep reminding yourself throughout the year that if you really want to reach a goal, you will find a way to achieve it.

SAGITTARIUS

23 NOV – 21 DEC

The start of November will draw your attention to your health and habits. If mistakes have been made, it's never too late to make amends. Foggy thoughts will delay major decisions around the 11th. Confusion can cause arguments. It's hard to know what to do for the best when too many people are making too many demands. Take your time and you will get results as the month ends. Energy returns and your spark will become stronger when it is protected from burnout.

CAPRICORN

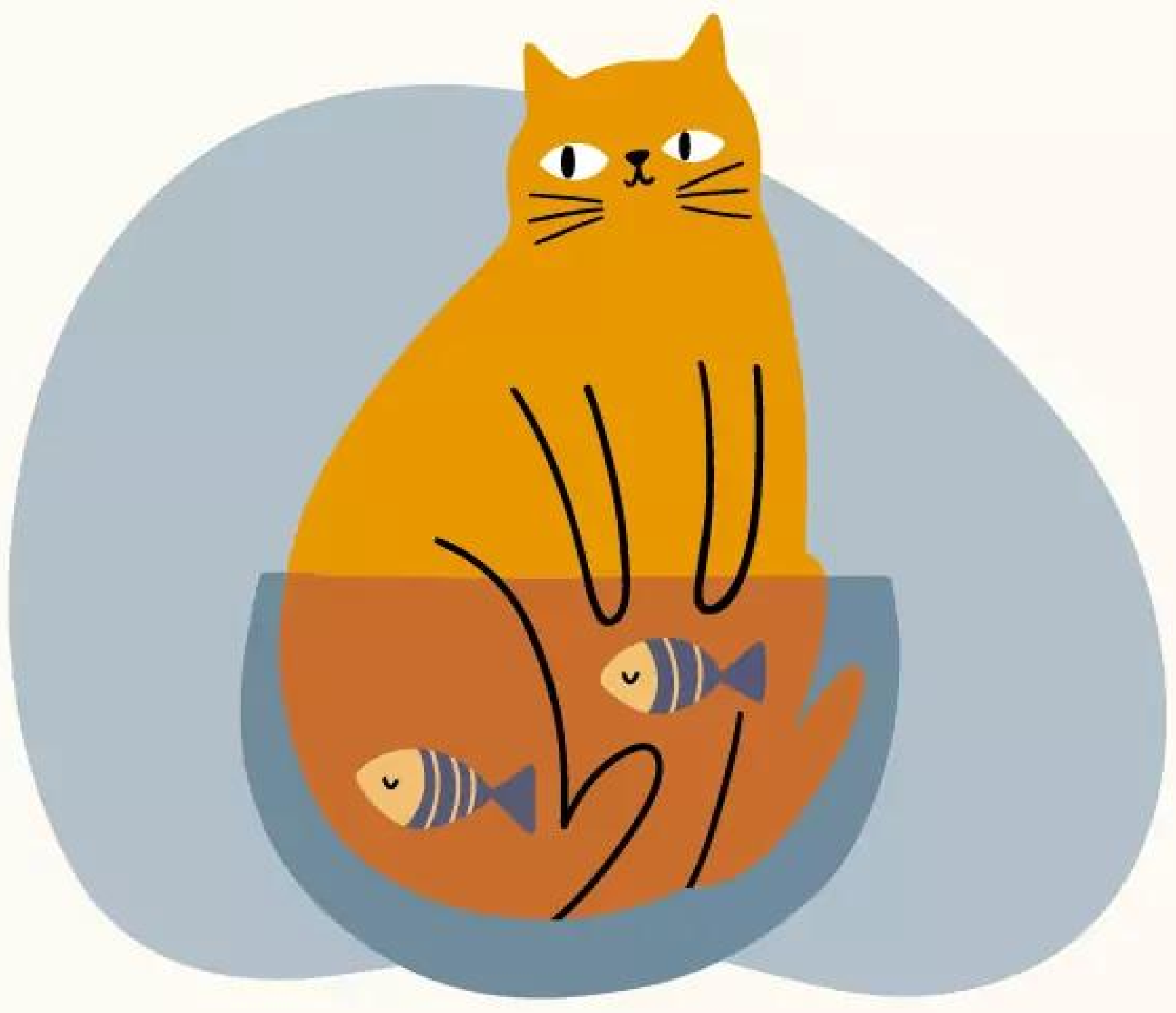
22 DEC – 20 JAN

There's a need to review your goals and friendships. The Full Moon asks are you living fully or just dutifully? Frustrations arise when someone's offhand remarks make you question your ideas. Don't take things personally. The New Moon on the 20th will help you connect with what's important to you. Prepare to be on the move as the month ends. Channel your energy into a project that feels right for you.

AQUARIUS

21 JAN – 19 FEB

Focus on reputation, responsibility, and direction. The Full Moon brings tension between home and purpose. What needs tending inside you? Confusion may arise around the 13th – breathe, pause, repeat. The New Moon encourages you to begin a new chapter. Who are you becoming? Take lessons you have learned with you and lead with insight, not impulse. A strong sense of where you are going will put you on the road to success.



PISCES

20 FEB – 20 MAR

Are you letting groundless fears hold you back? The Full Moon reveals what has been hidden in your communications or beliefs. Pause before reacting. Plans may stall, mid-month, or conversations will turn in circles. Rest is essential. The New Moon offers spiritual, emotional and creative renewal. By the end of November energy lightens and peace of mind returns. Choose experiences that stretch you but don't overwhelm you.

ARIES

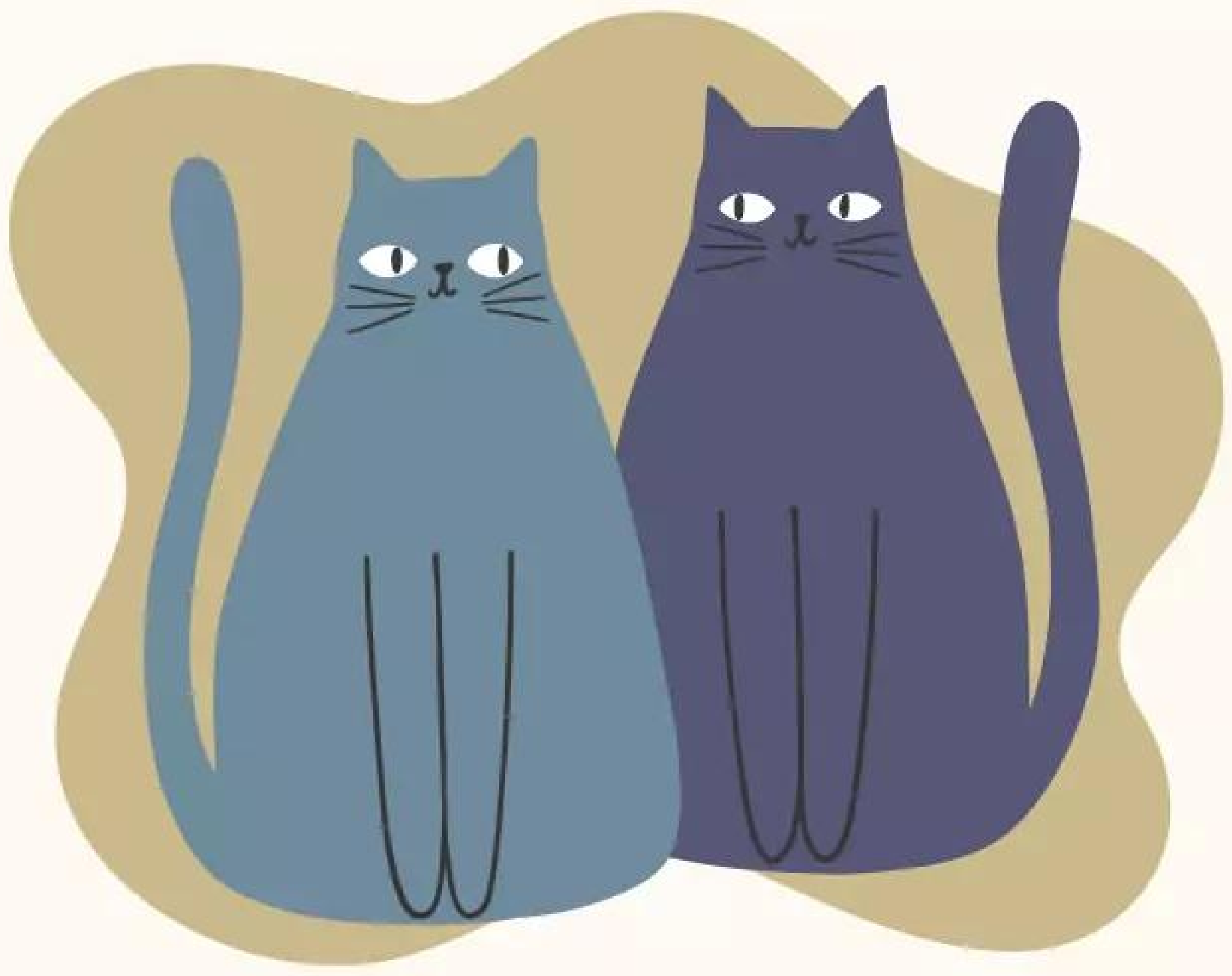
21 MAR – 20 APR

November begins with intensity as you feel driven to achieve. You're in tune with your deepest feelings. Around the 5th, old commitments come up for review. If these involve friends or loved ones, listen closely to them. Mid-month invites rest and a long look within. By the end of November, confirmation that you have made the right choices will give you the courage to try something new. Seek adventure but with purpose.

TAURUS

21 APR – 21 MAY

The Full Moon in your sign challenges comfort zones. Powerful emotions prompt you to break old cycles. When you feel overwhelmed, focus on your breathing and remember this too shall pass. A close relationship demands total honesty. Mid-month reflection will bring clarity on a joint issue, although home life might feel off-kilter. By the final week, let new plans form slowly. Self-worth is your strongest anchor now.



GEMINI

22 MAY – 21 JUNE

You will be pulled inward, even as the world demands your attention. The Full Moon lights up something long ignored. Don't hide from problems. If you have pain, consult a doctor. Communication may feel murky mid-November. Double-check details and re-read all texts and emails before sending. An opportunity as the month ends excites you. You will want to leap but walk first. Be curious, not careless. Protect your energy.

CANCER

22 JUNE – 23 JULY

There are emotional undercurrents and powerful intuitions this month and you'll want to retreat from everyday life. The Full Moon highlights friendships or dreams you have outgrown. A close relationship is volatile. Someone is being stubborn and nothing will get resolved. Eventually, new light will be shed on a misunderstanding and you can then push for an agreement. Health improves and hope increases as November ends.

LEO

24 JULY – 23 AUG

Take a break from work, commitments and the demands of life. The Full Moon brings attention to work-life balance. Around the 14th, communications will stall. In close relationships, allow silence to say what words cannot. You won't want to draw attention to yourself later so instead, focus on what's going on in the background. Your creativity and energy will be rekindled as November ends allowing you to express yourself.

VIRGO

24 AUG – 23 SEPT

The Full Moon highlights travel and learning. New experiences prompt new ideas and you will be learning a lot about yourself. You have been so focused on responsibility that you lost sight of what matters. Avoid signing or starting major things mid-month. Rest, revise and reflect. The month ends with renewed direction. Focus on what you want to do, not just what makes logical sense.

LIBRA

24 SEPT – 23 OCT

You're more aware of what gives your life depth and meaning. The Full Moon asks you to balance what you give with what you keep. Early November is ideal for reviewing shared responsibilities and emotional boundaries. Mid-month miscommunications may arise. Listen more than you speak. The New Moon will help you plant seeds of trust and stability, and you will want to explore new options and opportunities.

ISTOCK

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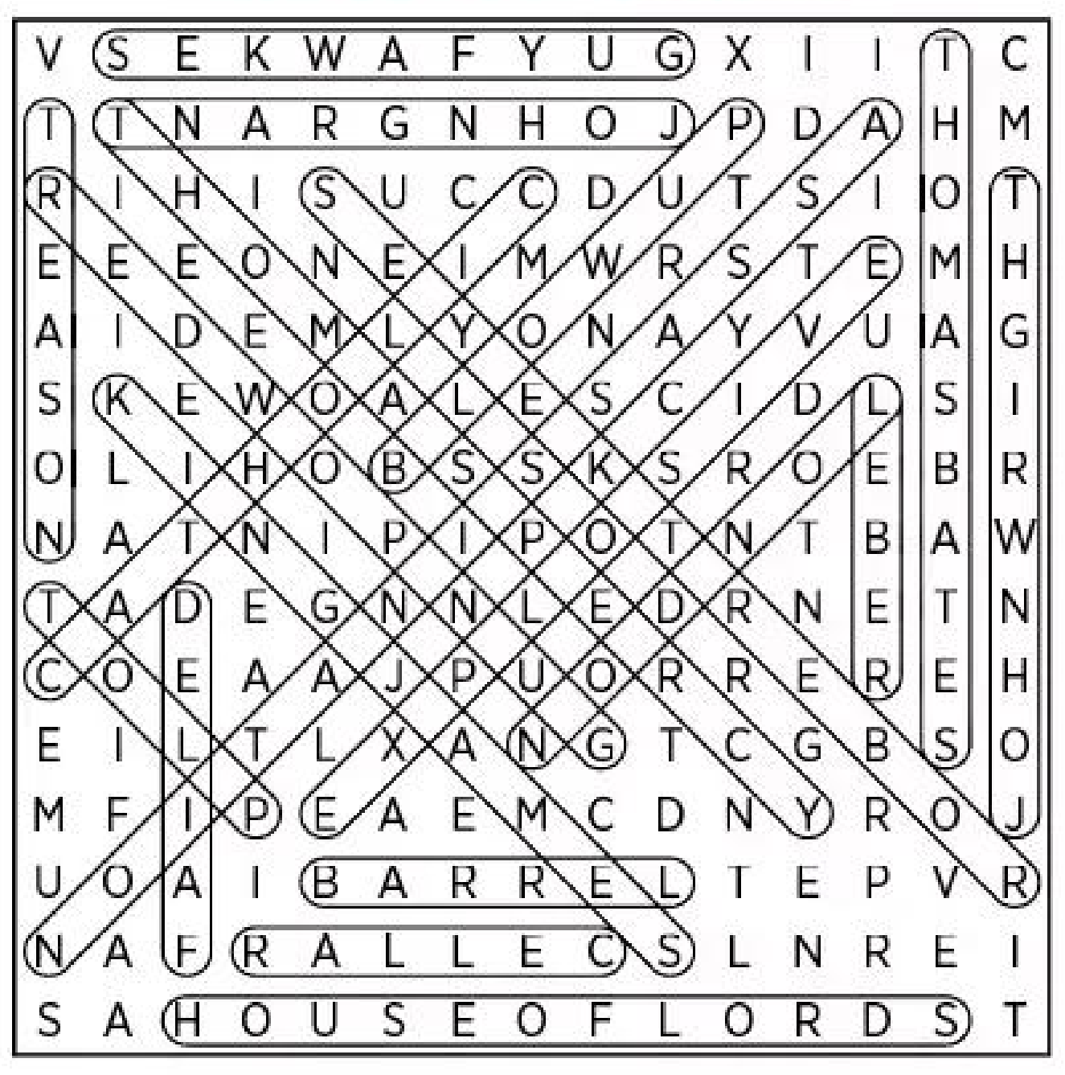
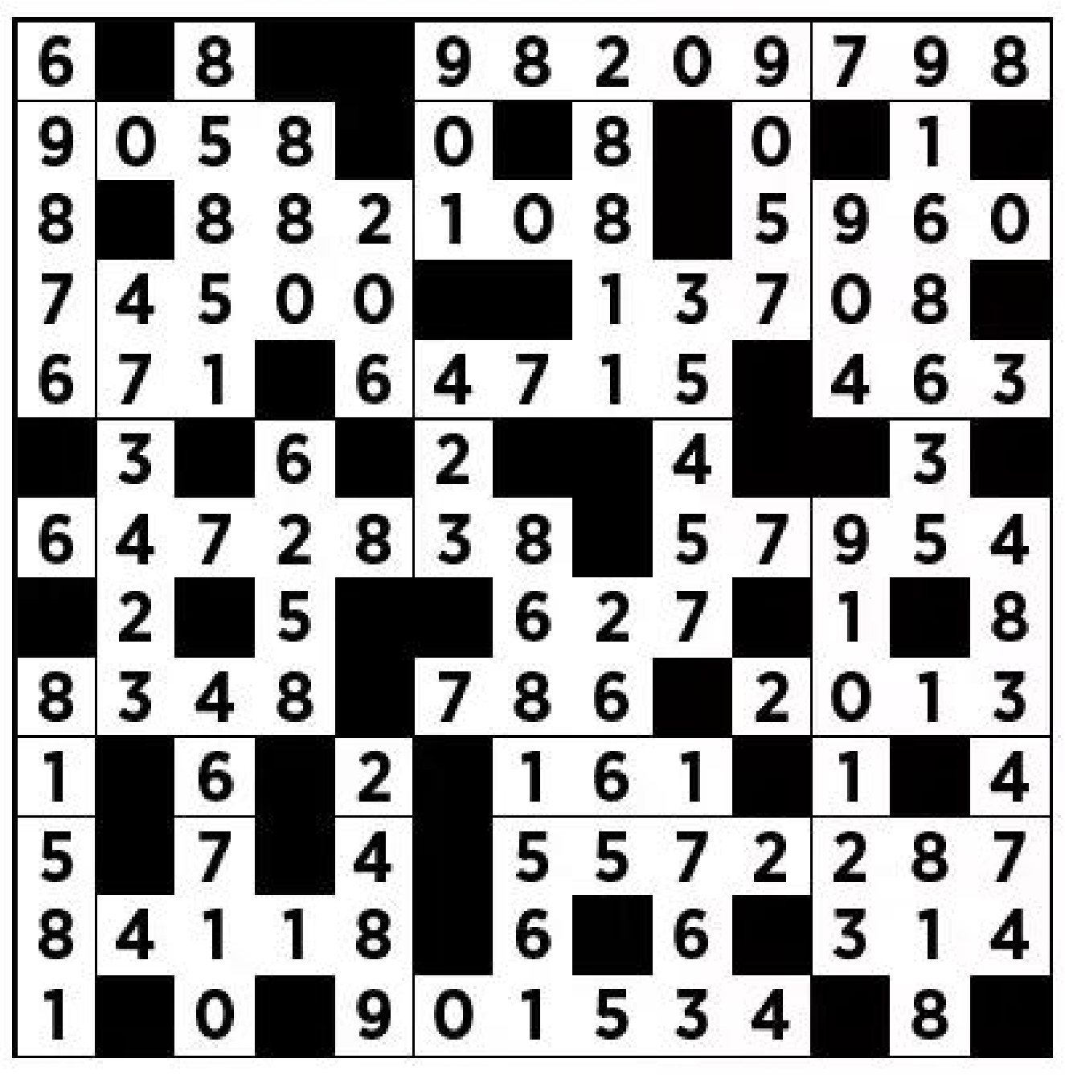
THIS MONTH'S SOLUTIONS

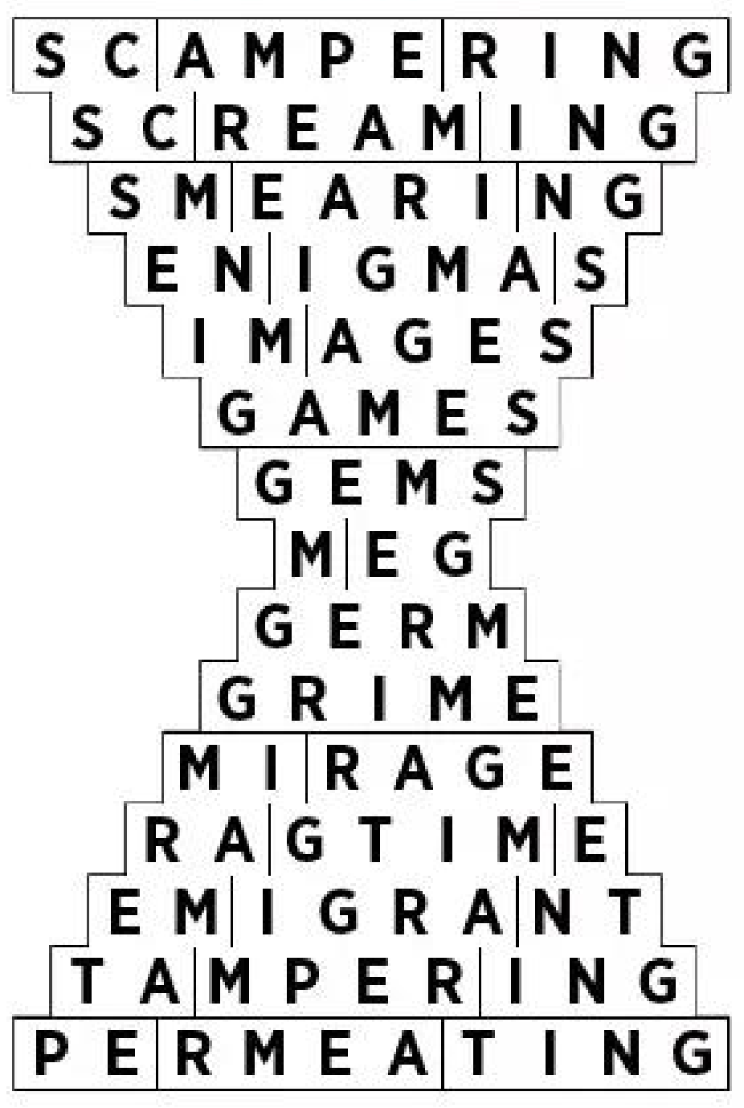
WORDSEARCH



NUMBERFIT



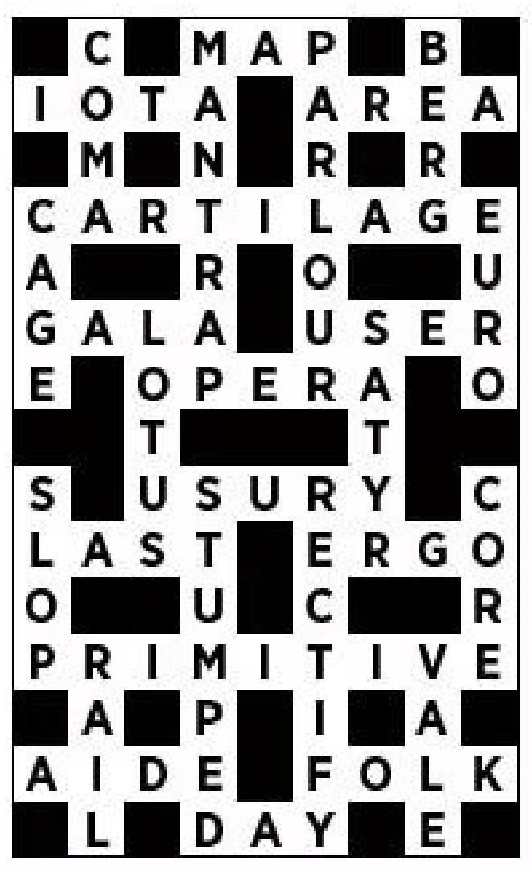
BRICKWORK



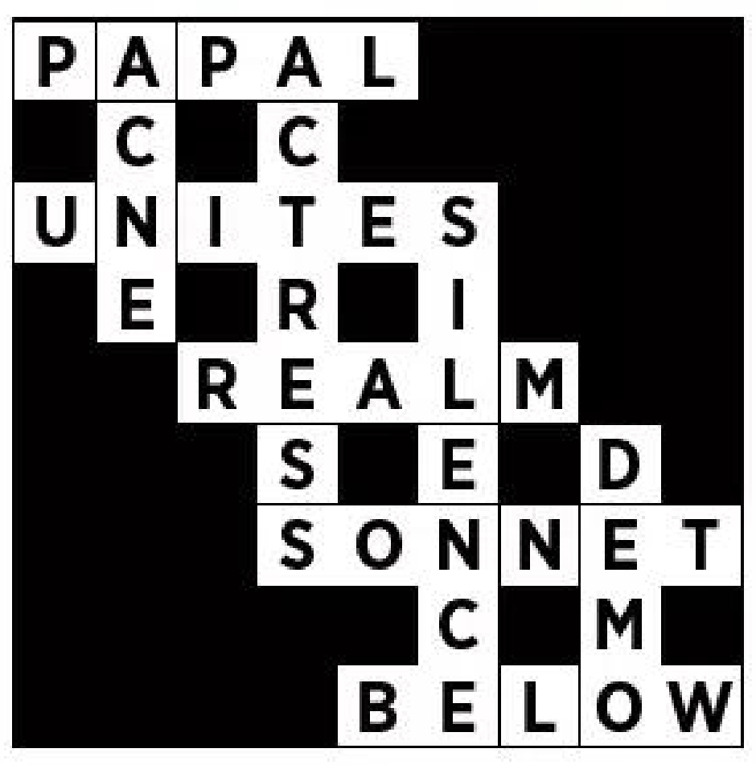
SUDOKU

4	3	5	2	9	8	1	6	7
7	2	8	3	1	6	4	9	5
9	1	6	5	7	4	2	3	8
6	8	2	7	5	3	9	1	4
5	4	9	6	2	1	8	7	3
3	7	1	4	8	9	6	5	2
2	6	3	1	4	5	7	8	9
1	9	7	8	3	2	5	4	6
8	5	4	9	6	7	3	2	1

PIECEWORD



ANAGRAM CROSSWORD



MISSING LINK WIND, LIFE, LUMP, SOUL, MAIL, MILK, NEST, BASE, FLAT, LEAD **Keyword:** ILLUMINATE

WORDBUILDER Learn Giant Infer Angel Inter; Rating Entail Tangle Retain Faring; Inflate Ringlet Reliant Granite Flaring; Integral Relating Altering Triangle Alerting; Faltering

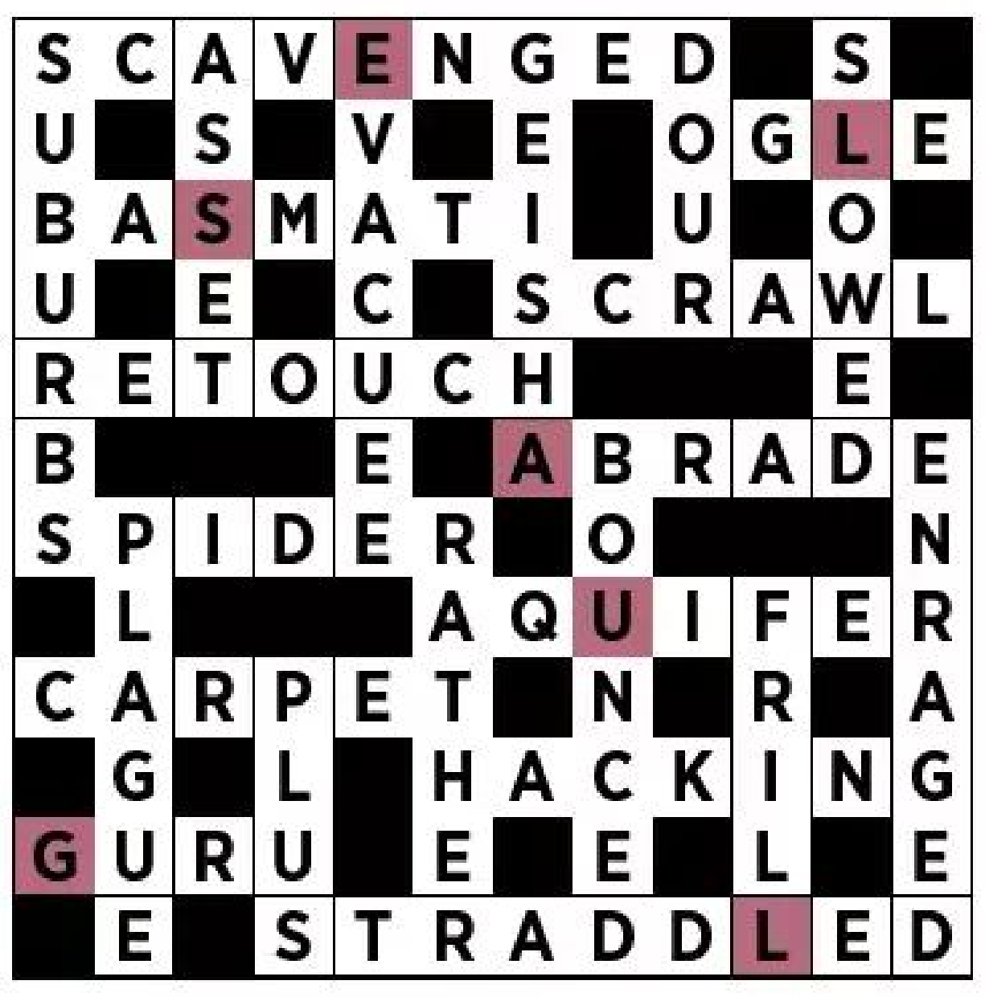
DO YOU KNOW? Katherine Matilda Swinton

QUIZZICAL 2010

PICTURE THIS Heather Small, Lou Reed and Tom Jones, together with many other artistes, sang on the 1997 BBC Children In Need single *Perfect Day*

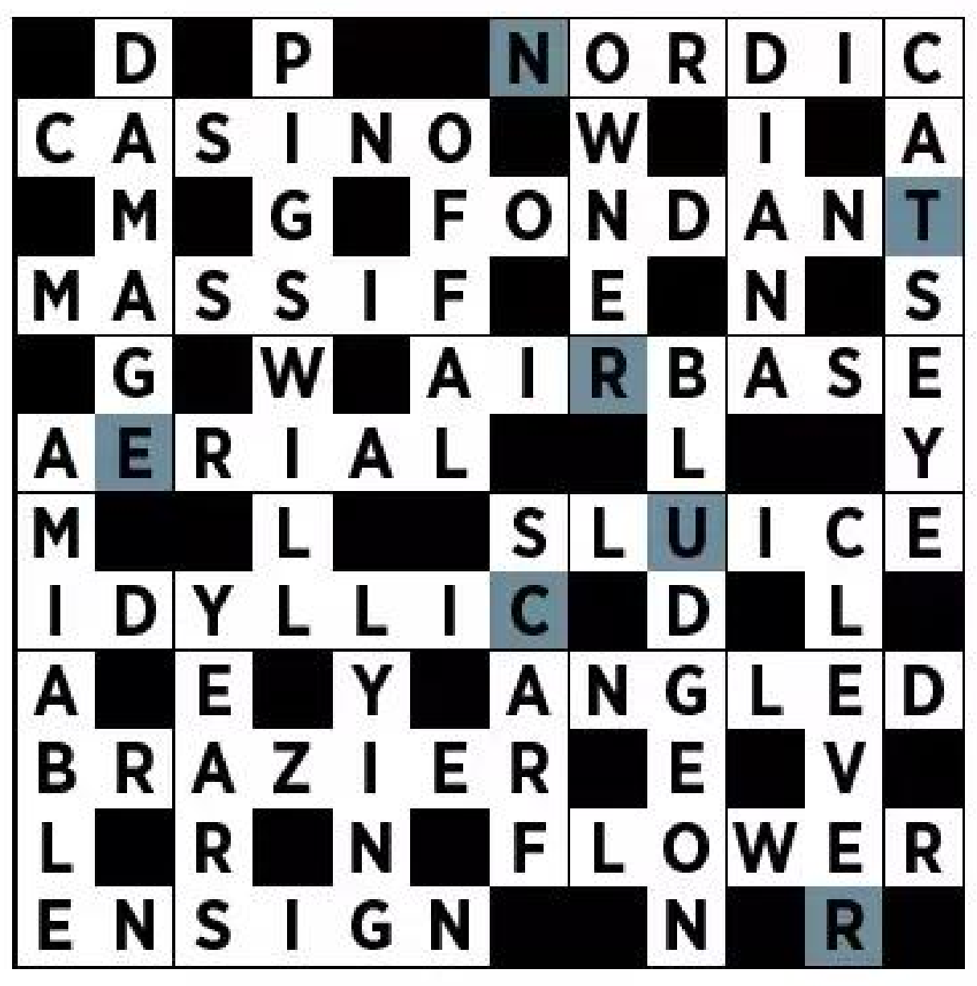
AUGUST SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD



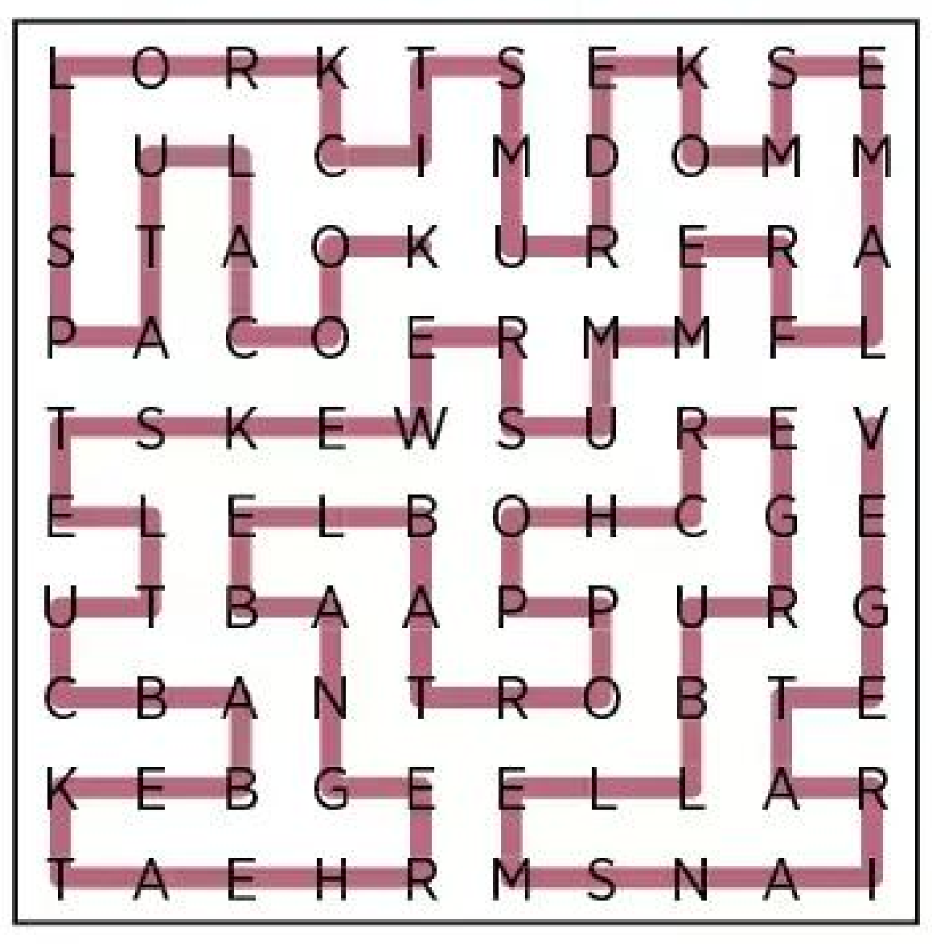
Keyword: **SEAGULL**

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



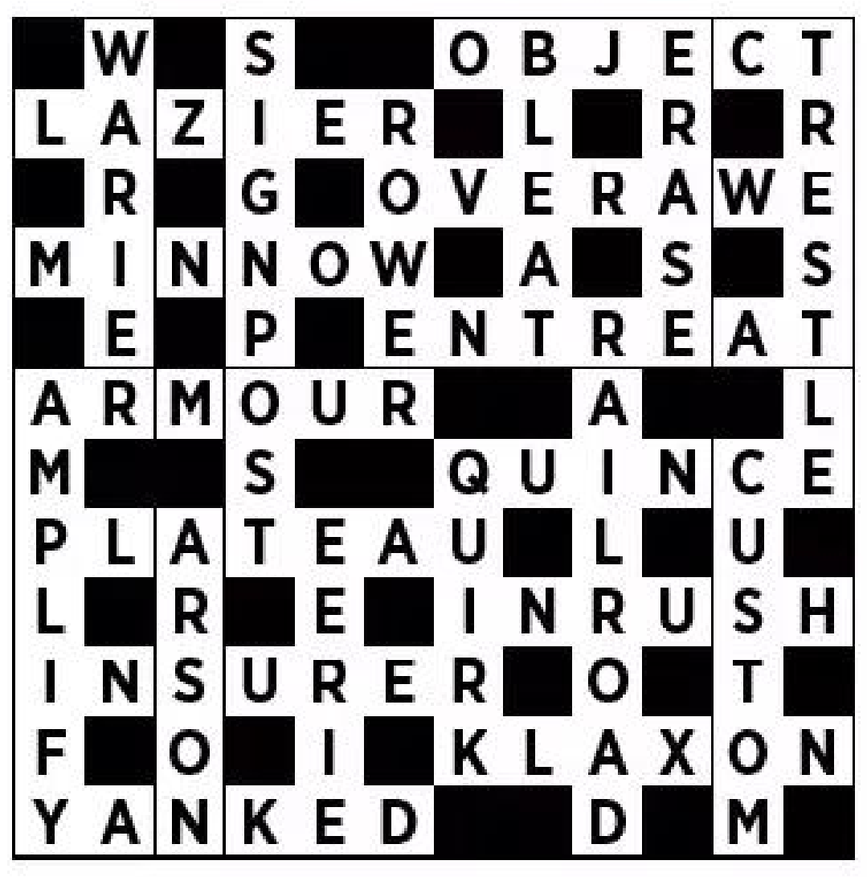
Keyword: **CURRENT**

PATHFINDER



The missing word is **SIZZLE**

CODEWORD



V	Q	P	C	M	Z	I	W	E	T	D	B	A
U	S	H	L	N	O	F	Y	J	X	K	R	G

Keyword: **WILDLIFE**

MATCHING PAIR A & D

WORDWHEEL The nine-letter word is: **QUARTERLY**

DID YOU SPOT THE PIGS IN AUGUST? 63, 107, 138

COMPETITION & FREE DRAW RULES GENERAL RULES

1 Competitions/free draws are open to Candis Club members resident in the UK or RoI, excluding employees of Newhall Publishing Ltd and their immediate families.

2 Winners must agree to the publication of their name, photograph and hometown in Candis, on its website or any publicity material produced. For a copy of the full rules, visit candis.co.uk/rules or call free on 0800 814 5400.

3 By participating, you accept the terms set out in the full rules. Candis Club's decision is final and binding.

4 Claims delayed or lost are not accepted. Proof of posting is not accepted as proof of receipt.

5 Phone entries cost 5p a minute any time from anywhere in the UK unless otherwise stated.

FREE PRIZE DRAW RULES

Non-members resident in Northern Ireland wishing to participate in free draws must request a free draw card in writing from the address on page 135. Entrants must register their claim with the club. Winning claims can be made either in writing to the address on page 135, by telephoning 0800 814 5400 or by emailing fpdclaim@candis.co.uk. All claims must include the participant's name, address and free draw number and must be made before the last day of the month printed on the cover of the issue of Candis magazine in which the draw appears.

RULES FOR OTHER COMPETITIONS AND GIVEAWAYS

1 Only one entry per competition/giveaway is allowed per entrant.

2 Entries to competitions/giveaways in this issue should be sent to the address on p135.

3 Except where specifically stated, the winner(s) will be the first correct entry/entries selected after the closing date.

4 The closing date for competitions/giveaways in this issue is 30 November 2025 unless otherwise stated.

5 No responsibility can be accepted for circumstances outside the company's control, including any third party's ability to supply the prizes as published. No cash alternatives can be offered and prizes are not transferable.

6 Entries will be processed and entrants' details may be made available to our partners or selected companies. If you object to this, please ring our customer relations team on 0800 814 5400. If you are unsure of your membership/free draw number, call 0800 814 5400 or email whataremynumbers@candis.co.uk

*CALLS COST 5P PER MINUTE PLUS YOUR COMPANY'S ACCESS CHARGE

PUZZLE & COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

You can enter all of our fabulous competitions and great giveaways on the one handy form you see below! You can also enter most of our competitions and giveaways online – along with other wonderful web-only prizes – at candis.co.uk/competitions and candis.co.uk/giveaways

POST TO CANDIS NOVEMBER COMPETITIONS,

Newhall Publishing Ltd, New Hall Lane, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 4BQ

Closing date 30 November 2025

Full name ____________________

Address ____________________

____

____

____

Postcode ____________________

Telephone no. ____________________

Email address ____________________

Candis Club no. ________

GIVEAWAYS Tick to enter		
Page 56	Accessories prize ☐ Shoe size ________	
Giveaways, pages 108-109	1 ☐	2 ☐
	3 ☐	4 ☐
	5 ☐	6 ☐
Page 138	Wish list ☐	

COMPETITIONS		**ANSWER**
Page 106	KEEN walking shoes	
Page 111	Spot the matching pair	
Page 112	Pathfinder	
Page 115	Codeword	
Page 116	Cryptic crossword	
Page 117	Quick crossword	
Page 118	Wordwheel	

FIND THESE PIGGIES AND WIN

£100

We've got three prizes of £100 up for grabs in our fun Piggy Prize Draw. Simply find the three pigs hiding on the pages of this month's Candis and write the page numbers below. Three winners will then be chosen at random after the closing date of 30 November 2025.

Piggy page numbers:

MOVING HOUSE?

IF YOU'RE A MEMBER, TELL US YOUR NEW ADDRESS. JUST CALL OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS TEAM ON 0800 814 5400 OR LOG ON TO CANDIS.CO.UK/CHANGEDETAILS BEFORE THE DATE OF YOUR MOVE

How buying a subscription helps…

In 2025, Candis Club will donate at least £100,000 from members' magazine subscription revenue to health charities taking part in the Candis Big Give. Any additional funds will go to charities at the discretion of the General Committee of Candis Club.

Candis
HEALTH · HAPPINESS · FAMILY LIFE
CAROL KIRKWOOD
"We think we're in charge of our own destiny but it's just not true"
OVER £56 MILLION TO HEALTH CHARITIES SINCE 1962

To find out more about all the charities taking part in this year's Candis Big Give go to **candis.co.uk/charity**

"**THE MISSION OF CANDIS CLUB** IS TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER, TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY LIFE, AND TO SUPPORT AND ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF HEALTH CHARITIES"

CANDIS CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER AT 10AM

at the offices of Newhall Publishing Ltd. Anyone wishing to attend can pre-register to log in and attend the meeting remotely. Email customer@candis.co.uk

THE CANDIS TEAM Consulting Editor Anita Comerford | **Creative Director** Gareth Evans **Art Editor** Lindsay Price | **Senior Graphic Designer** Jess Lord | **Picture Editor** Tracey Pocock **Senior Content Editor** Sally Evans | **Content Editor** Olivia Wilkinson | **Fashion & Beauty Editor** Justine Brennan | **Food Editor** Catherine Hill | **Sub Editors** Gill Hook, Julie Hawker **Repro** Stephen Dobbie | **Editorial Director** Fergus McShane | **Finance Manager** Julie Shaw | **Managing Director** Richard Woolliams | **Advertising** Heather Borrett | **Advertising enquiries** 07932 834207 | **Printed by** Acorn Web | Published for Candis Club by Newhall Publishing Ltd, New Hall Lane, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 4BQ | Email customer@candis.co.uk

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DONATIONS TO DATE

We never forget it's YOUR subscriptions that enable Candis Club to give huge amounts to charities. Our running total shows how much

£31,620,386
to the Cancer and Polio Research Fund (1962 to 2002)

£4,429,597
to the National Asthma Campaign (1990 to 2002)

£5,500,979
to Marie Curie (1998 to 2012)

£3,304,767
to Macmillan Cancer Support (1993 to 2013)

£3,309,982
to Bliss, the special care baby charity (1990 to 2009)

£2,190,977
to Liverpool University's Cancer Tissue Bank Research Centre (1989 to 1993)

£1,549,998
to the British Heart Foundation (2002 to 2008)

£914,053
to local groups via the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) (1990 to 2009)

£220,000
to ICAN (1989)

£246,876
to Tommy's, the baby charity (2006 to 2009)

£303,774
to Children's Hospices UK (2008 to 2010)

£3,100,000
to charities in the Candis Big Give

TOTAL TO DATE
£56,841,389

PHOTO ISTOCK

NEXT MONTH IN

Candis

Christmas sorted!

Your complete festive menu

All the trimmings for seasonal style

Great places for family days out

WIN

FABULOUS PRIZES FOR ALL AGES IN OUR FESTIVE GIFT GUIDE BONANZA!

PLUS TAKE PART IN THIS YEAR'S CANDIS BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE

NOT A MEMBER? TO SUBSCRIBE CALL 0800 814 5400 OR GO TO CANDIS.CO.UK/SUBSCRIBE

WISH **LIST**

We've five amazing products for your Christmas list – or for a chance to win if you enter our giveaway!

WIN THE ENTIRE PAGE

– ENTER ON PAGE 135...

SO VERSATILE

Made from the best Italian leather, this Large Busby Leather Bag in Charcoal is perfect for all your essentials. Its antiqued bronze hardware adds classic charm, and it can be worn as a shoulder bag, crossbody, or a stylish clutch. **£110** *busbyandfox.com*

ENHANCE ANY LOOK

Ideal for layering, this 100 per cent viscose gauze scarf offers an airy texture, perfect for chilly days. Featuring an exclusive print in autumnal colours, it drapes beautifully. **£23.50** *nomadsclothing.com*

FESTIVE COUNTDOWN

Celebrate Christmas with fragrances you know and some that are new. This new Yankee Candle® 24 Days of Fragrance Wreath Advent Calendar will fill December days with gorgeous joyful scents. **£28.99** *yankeecandle.co.uk*

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24 Days of Fragrance Advent Calendar
24 Days

elizabeth grant
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SANCERRE
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Show your hands some love with Collagen Re-Inforce Perfect and Protect Hand Cream. Ideal for ageing skin, it has five types of collagen and Torricelumn™ compound, to firm, smooth and hydrate the skin. **£24** *elizabethgrantuk.com, debenhams.com*

FRANCE'S FINEST

Enjoy this fresh and elegant Joseph Mellot Sancerre Le Montarlet Sauvignon Blanc as an apéritif or pair it with white meats. **£24.50** *tesco.com*

COMPILED BY **SALLY EVANS**

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